







A Century of  
Political Development





# A Century of Political Development

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'BOOKS TO READ AND HOW TO READ THEM,'

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EDINBURGH AND LONDON

MCMVIII



## PREFACE.

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WITH the exception of the two concluding chapters, the contents of this volume appeared in the columns of the 'Edinburgh Evening News.' In compliance with numerous requests, I have reproduced the papers in permanent form, in the hope that they will have value as a bird's-eye view of a century of political development. In the chapter on Imperialism I have reproduced portions of a pamphlet, 'The Gospel of Force,' written by me for the Young Scots Society.

H. M.

EDINBURGH, *February* 1908.



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# A CENTURY OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT.

## CHAPTER I.

### PRELIMINARY SURVEY.

"A CENTURY has passed away since the Duke of Liancourt brought to Louis XVI. the tidings of the capture of the Bastille by the Parisian mob." "It is a revolt," exclaimed the ill-fated monarch. "Sire," replied the Duke, "it is a Revolution." "A Revolution, indeed," remarks Mr Lilly in his suggestive work, "or, rather, the Revolution of these latter days; the greatest which the world has experienced for wellnigh two thousand years. . . . The French Revolution opens a new chapter in the world's history." In a former volume dealing with the intellectual



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development of the past century<sup>1</sup> it was shown how the various phases of thought—religious, philosophical, scientific, and literary—took their peculiar forms from the Revolution, and how, without a clear understanding of that great event, the intellectual history of the last hundred years remains unintelligible. The same remark applies with even greater force to the political development. An event which shook to the foundations the whole system of European government, from which emanated principles which revolutionised action as well as thought, demands careful study by way of preliminary to a thorough understanding of the course of political evolution.

What, then, was the significance of the French Revolution in the region of politics? Nothing but error, however, will arise if we isolate the political factor and treat it as if it had no organic connection with the other factors which go to make up modern civilisation. At first sight it may seem as if between religion and politics there was no very close relation; and yet when we go back to the

<sup>1</sup> 'A Century of Intellectual Development.'

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French Revolution we find that the causes which overthrew the official religion also destroyed the political system. In the political, as in the religious, sphere, it remains true that the conception which mankind form of their relation to the Deity determines their conception of their relation to society. The relations between these things are very obscure in modern times, owing to the fact which Comte was never tired of emphasising, that modern civilisation is in a state of chaos. Men are living in a time when society is intellectually disorganised. No one system of belief holds the modern mind. Between men's religious, philosophical, and political views there is no logical connection. Society has lost its organic unity, and it is not till we go back to the middle ages, when Romanism held sway over men's minds, that we become conscious of the fact that there can be such a thing as a life system, in which man's relations to God and society are seen to hold together with something like logical completeness. If, therefore, we are to understand the real effect of the French Revolution in the political sphere, :

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we must have clear ideas of the system against which it was a dramatic and lurid protest.

Roman Catholicism, then, as the great foe of the Revolution, demands our closest attention. It is impossible to understand Romanism aright if we view it simply as a form of religion. It was something more : it was a vast system which sought to bring within its sweep not merely the spiritual but the secular interests of mankind. It aspired not only to open the gates of heaven, but also to govern the earth. In its palmy days during the middle ages, Romanism included within its sphere of influence the intellectual as well as the spiritual side of life, the political as well as the ecclesiastical. The stern foe of new ideas, Romanism frowned upon intellectual movements which made for mental independence. The stern foe of nationalities, Romanism sought to preserve its world-wide sway by ruling kings and princes with a spiritual rod of iron in the form of excommunication. But in both spheres, the intellectual and the political, the spirit of the age was against it. Intel-

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lectual movements in the form of Humanism silently sapped the doctrine of intellectual infallibility, and the movement in favour of nationalities which sprang out of the chaos of the middle ages sapped the theocratic pretensions and power of the Papacy. Foiled in its endeavours to reign unchecked over rising nationalities, Romanism did the next best thing for its own interest,—it sought to rule by means of the doctrine of divine right through monarchs who were devoted to the Church. Romanism, in brief, was a colossal system whose object was the despotic rule of man and society in all spheres, sacred and secular. On the spiritual side the Church stood as the mediator between heaven and earth. Only through its channels could divine grace flow to man; only those ideas which received the stamp of orthodoxy were allowed to enter the mind; and only those rights which received the sanction of the Church were conceded to man and society. The duty of man and society was implicit submission to the Church; the duty of the Church was to exercise absolute power over man and society.

The Reformation greatly weakened the des-

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potic power of Romanism, and by introducing the idea of individual right strengthened the movement for intellectual independence which originated at the Renaissance, and which ultimately made for political independence. In its despotic reign Romanism was greatly aided by Feudalism, whose fundamental idea, like that of Rome, was unquestioning submission to a superior power. However much we may applaud Protestantism for the great work it did in the emancipation of man, we must not forget that its success was largely due to the fact that both the Church of Rome and Feudalism, in consequence of the rise of Industrialism, found themselves in hopeless antagonism to the spirit of the new time. The economic conditions greatly aided Protestantism in its contest with Romanism. The teaching of the Church, as Lecky well shows, was based on monastic, ascetic, and similar ideals, which were totally incompatible with the industrial and commercial spirit. At every turn industry and commerce were hampered by laws and teachings which not only repressed individual effort and initiative, which are the

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roots of Industrialism, but which treated the accumulation of wealth and devotion to money-getting as sinful. Feudalism was equally opposed to the industrial spirit. The Church and the feudal superiors between them undertook to control all the various operations of society. Men, as members of society, had duties, not rights. Spencer makes this quite clear as follows: "Up to the tenth century each domain in France had its bond or only partially free workmen and artisans, directed by the seigneur, and paid in meals and goods. Between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries the feudal superiors — ecclesiastical or lay — regulated production and distribution to such an extent that industrial and commercial licences had to be purchased from them; in the subsequent monarchical stage, it was a legal maxim that 'the right to labour is a royal right which the prince may sell and subjects may buy,' and onwards to the time of the Revolution the country swarmed with officials who authorised occupation, directed processes, examined products." Everything was fixed by statutes. In industry, in re-

ligion, in politics, variations which would have been profitable to civilisation were crushed out. The labourer who claimed the right to work for himself was treated as a rebel serf, the religious man who claimed the right to dissent from the Church was a heretic, and the political man who rose against consecrated despotism was a traitor. This attempt on the part of the Church to include within the sphere of its regulating powers all phases of social life rises naturally out of the theocratic idea which recognises no distinction between things sacred and things secular. Under such a system the all-powerful word is obedience.

This is the reason of the fact mentioned by Mr Bryce, that the middle ages were non-political. The idea of individual duties being supreme, there was no room for the idea of individual rights. But with the rise of industry at the expense of Feudalism there resulted a set of economic conditions to deal with which theocratic conceptions were totally inadequate. With the rise of the Free Cities, for instance, the old doctrine of Might, upon which political despotism rested, gave place

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to a new doctrine of Right. Industry, if it were to make progress at all, demanded liberty. At bottom the demand of the city dweller was the demand that no longer should he be subordinated to the feudal power; that he had certain natural rights—the right to labour and to the fruits of his labour, and such like—of which neither Church nor feudal lord could deprive him. Freedom was no longer accepted as a boon, it was claimed as a right. Under the pressure of the rising Individualism, the theocratic form of government proved not only totally inadequate but positively harmful. To us the theocratic idea as incarnated in the Papacy seems somewhat grotesque, but looked at closely it is not without plausibility. Politics cannot be treated as an isolated branch of knowledge. The view which a thinker holds of the principles of social and political phenomena will depend upon the views which he holds of the origin and early development of society. Accept the dogma of the depravity of man and the consequent need of supernatural interference in human affairs, and it is not astonishing that the view should come to be held that



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the government of societies is a supernatural matter. Either God directly interferes in human affairs, or He delegates His power to certain sacred persons as in the Old Testament, or to an institution like the Roman Catholic Church. So long as this theory is accepted, the one word which sums up politics is obedience. In such a state of society men's minds are occupied with duties, not with rights. But with disbelief in the theocratic powers of the Church comes the necessity to find a natural instead of a supernatural theory of society. The first question that presents itself to the student in search of a natural explanation is, How did political constitutions arise? How came society to assume the political shape? An answer to this is essential before a place can be found for the idea of sovereignty. We want to know how political organisations arise before we can discover why one part should claim to exercise sovereignty over the rest. "In every form of government," as Sir Frederick Pollock has remarked, "you must come at last to some power which is absolute, to which all other powers of the State are subject, and which itself is subject

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to none. The possession of such power is sovereignty, and the person or body in whom it resides is sovereign." Between them the Reformation and Industrialism had discredited the divine sovereignty of the Church. The theocratic idea was no longer acceptable to thinking men. What was to take its place? In the attempt to answer this question the science of politics, which had practically disappeared with Aristotle, once more came to the front. Before we come to the dramatic contribution which the French Revolution gave to political science, we must briefly deal with the speculations of three thinkers—Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau—whose writings had a direct bearing on the doctrines of the Revolution.

One effect of the Reformation was to throw discredit upon the principle of authority by which the Papacy had held society together. With the breakdown of the theocratic system thinkers began anxious search for a conception of sovereignty which would be at once natural and authoritative. The most comprehensive attempt to found a natural basis for the idea of sovereignty was made by Hobbes. Hobbes

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was an ambitious thinker. He may be called the Spencer of his time. Not content with formulating a new theory of politics, he set himself to substitute for the supernaturalism of Romanism a complete theory of life resting upon purely naturalistic principles. In fact, it would be difficult to over-estimate the great influence which the writings of Hobbes have had in the region of physics, ethics, and psychology; but at present our chief interest lies with the ideas of Hobbes in regard to the ultimate seat of political authority. It is characteristic of the philosophic trend of the mind of Hobbes that his political theory is rooted in a psychological and ethical estimate of man. It is a suggestive fact that, from a purely naturalistic point of view, Hobbes reached a conception of man not unlike that which underlay the theological conception which he combated. The primitive man of Hobbes is by no means a likeable being. Early man, according to Hobbes, was an unsocial, self-seeking, churlish creature, with a large slice of ferocity in his nature. Self is the pivot on which primitive humanity turns. Without know-

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ing it, Hobbes seems to have imported into his political philosophy the original sin of theology. Given individuals of unsocial habits, greedy, jealous, and self-seeking, how would society originate? How could beings possessed of such repellent qualities ever draw together so as to form what we know as society? If war was the natural condition of primitive men, how did they ever come together in peaceful union? It was plain, even to the selfish intelligence of primitive man, that the state of war was not conducive to security, not to say happiness. In order to get over the difficulty the members of the primitive society met one fine day, and agreed that some authority was necessary in order that Society should rest on a basis of peace. How was that authority to be constituted? If one man had as much right to his opinion as another, and as each was jealous of his neighbour, and disposed to be aggressive on the slightest provocation, where was the authority which could hold all the jarring and warring elements to come from? Hobbes imagined an assembly meeting for the purpose of furnishing themselves with government.

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Primitive men made a covenant with one another to elect one of their number as sovereign with unlimited powers,—so unlimited indeed that, no matter how despotic were his acts, the community, having granted those powers, could not revoke them, and had no alternative but abject submission.

Here was a species of divine right which was specially acceptable to the Royalist party of the time of Hobbes. The clergy, it must be said, did not relish the new species of despotism which Hobbes had created. The old divine right despotism had a theological basis, and its adoption led to the glorification of ecclesiasticism; but the new divine right elevated the sovereign above both the sacred and secular powers—a fact which Charles II. highly appreciated. Bishop Burnet records that Hobbes's political writings “made deep and lasting impressions upon the King's mind.” After the Restoration Charles gave Hobbes many tokens of his regard. He hung his portrait in his own private room in Whitehall, and conferred upon him a pension. It is not necessary at this time of day to expend time in criticism of the political philosophy of

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Hobbes. His theory of the origin of society had no basis in fact, and his theory of Absolutism is likewise without historical justification. The truth is, the political speculations of Hobbes had their root in an attempt to construct a theory of government which had nothing in common with either Romanism or Protestantism. In view of the chaotic state of society at the time of Hobbes, it is easy to see that in his opinion something resembling the papal idea of authority, against which no appeal is allowed, was a necessity in politics. The craving for order and unity which led Romanists to postulate a divinely ordained Church as the ultimate authority, led Hobbes, in his dislike of supernaturalism, to find the ultimate authority in an absolute and irresponsible sovereign.

Just as we have in the Restoration the key to the writings of Hobbes, so in the Revolution of 1688 we have the key to the political thinking of Locke. Only too faithfully had the Stuarts translated into practice the Hobbes theory of Absolutism, which, in actual life, had been weighed in the balance and found wanting. The Whigs, who were

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responsible for the Revolution, had practically laid it down as a maxim that there was a limit to the rule of the sovereign. The question was as to the limit and how it can be justified historically. Locke, like Hobbes, was a believer in an original compact. But where Locke differed from Hobbes was in declaring that in the terms of the original compact the power of the sovereign was limited, not absolute. According to Hobbes, society originated in the voluntary surrendering by the members of their rights to an absolute authority, in consequence of their inability to live together peacefully on any other terms. Locke, with a more hopeful view of human nature, held a different view of the origin of society. Locke, unlike Hobbes, believed that primitive man was really a sociable animal. He found satisfaction in society. Society, with Locke, existed before government, and was not, as with Hobbes, the creation of government. Man, as man, had certain natural rights which were not conferred by government, but which government was necessary for the protection of,—notably the right to property,

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which is the fruit of individual liberty. The relation between Hobbes and Locke may be stated thus: Both agreed that society originated in a compact, but while Hobbes held that the prime condition of the compact was the granting of absolute power to the one who was elected sovereign, Locke held that the sovereign's power was conditional, on the ground that, on entering into the original compact, primitive man still retained certain natural rights, particularly the right to preserve liberty and property, which the sovereign must respect. Hobbes was so impressed with the evils of anarchy as he had seen it in his day, that he considered the evils of absolute despotism to be more endurable; while Locke contended that society would be intolerable, if not impossible, unless those who exercised sovereign power were compelled to use the power within well-defined limits—namely, the public good, which meant respect for certain natural rights of man. In a word, while Hobbes makes it the duty of the citizen to be absolutely submissive to the decrees of the sovereign, Locke makes it the duty of the sovereign to have respect to the rights



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of the citizen, and in making laws to consider the public good. If a sovereign, neglecting his duty, insists upon acting as if he had a divine right to govern without regard to the public good, what then? In the last resort there remains Revolution. Thus it came about that in Locke the idea of an original compact in harmony with the idea of certain natural rights of man led naturally to the justification of the Revolution of 1688, when the people cashiered their sovereign for failing to observe the limitations which pertained to his office.

On this account Locke's writings became the political Bible of the Whigs. In his writings the Whigs found justification for their work in substituting a limited for an absolute monarchy. Writers on this subject, who as a rule are Englishmen, write as if Locke held a monopoly of what may be called Revolution principles. As a matter of fact, in Scotland this very question of the power of the sovereign occupied the minds of Scotsmen long before Locke wrote his famous book. In 1651, when Charles II. was crowned at Scone, Robert Douglas, in delivering the

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coronation sermon, gave utterance to the following sentiment: "It is good for our King to learn to be wise in time, and know that he receiveth this day a power to govern, but a power limited by contract, and those conditions he is bound to stand to. There must be no tyranny on the throne." That this was no isolated view, dictated by a special occasion, is clear from the fact that several years before, in 1644, Samuel Rutherford published his famous book 'Lex Rex,' in which occurs the following: "The power of creating a man a king is from the people. If the king have not the consent of the people he is a usurper, for we know no external call that kings have, nor their family, to the crown but in the call of the people. The law is not the king's own, but given to him in trust. Power is not an immediate inheritance from heaven, but a birthright of the people borrowed from them." On the basis of this the Covenanters refused to recognise the claim of Charles to interfere with their natural right to worship God in their own way. They refused absolutely to subscribe to the dictum of Hobbes that the

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- ✓ sovereign was the source of law, and that  
“to the laws which the sovereign maketh  
the sovereign is not subject.” Macaulay  
wrote his ‘History of England’ to vindicate  
the Revolution sentiments and to justify  
the constitutional principles which destroyed  
the absolutism of the Stuarts. In all this  
Macaulay was unconsciously glorifying the  
✓ Covenanters, whose words and deeds became  
in England, as well as in Scotland, the seed  
of our constitutional liberties.

## CHAPTER II.

### ROUSSEAU AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

It cannot be too steadily kept in view that the political development of humanity is simply a phase of the great evolutionary process. In this process ideas play an increasingly important part. Ideas, it has been said, rule the world. At the same time, it should be remembered that ideas themselves are subject to the evolutionary process. In order that they shall prevail they must have a congenial environment. In the intellectual as in the physical sphere the law of the survival of the fittest holds good. An idea, like an organism, survives, not because it is necessarily the best, but because it is most suited to its environment. This is specially noticeable in the case of political ideas. The theocratic idea of sover-

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eighty flourished over a long period of time, because it carried with it the element of authority, which was admirably adapted to a social state which was devoid of self-control. At the time of Hobbes it seemed to thoughtful men that anarchy would get the upper hand unless the monarch had absolute power. With a change in the political environment the theory of Hobbes was superseded by that of Locke, whose political ideas were admirably adapted to the Revolution period of 1688. The English theories, however, were not capable of being transplanted. In France the conditions were such that some new conception of sovereignty was necessary before headway could be made against the crushing absolutism of the monarchy. The new idea of sovereignty is associated with the name of Rousseau. Rousseau came to the study of political philosophy with a mind saturated with the teachings of Hobbes and Locke. He, too, like them, founded his theory of government on a theory of man. Man, he held, was naturally good. The Church view was that man was naturally bad, and on that was based its despotic theory of government.

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Clearly, if Rousseau's claim on behalf of the people was to be heard, it was necessary that he should substitute for the doctrine of the natural badness of man the doctrine of the natural goodness of man. If man is naturally good, how then are we to account for the misery of man? It would not suit the purpose of Rousseau to adopt the theory of Hobbes, who looked to absolute despotism as a remedy for social anarchy. France had tried absolute despotism, and it had proved a miserable failure. The terrible condition of the nation at the time of Rousseau was the result of despotic government, and in that direction no guidance was to be found. Neither could Locke's theory of government commend itself to Rousseau. That theory was the natural product of political conditions totally unlike those of France. England at the time of Locke was in possession of institutions and constitutional forms of government which enabled the people to pass from absolute to limited monarchy with the minimum of revolutionary disturbance. Locke was able, by his political philosophy, to show that the Revolution of 1688 was no

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revolution in the strict sense of the term, but was really a reassertion of political rights which were embodied in the Constitution.

In France the situation was entirely different. True, Montesquieu held a theory of government not unlike that of Locke. Montesquieu had closely studied the English Constitution, and would have been pleased to see the Government of France framed on that model. He was all for constitutional reform as opposed to the revolutionary schemes of the school of Rousseau. But the conditions in France were such as did not lend themselves to constitutional reform. In England the popular will found expression through Parliamentary forms, however imperfect. The representatives of the great Whig houses were as determinedly opposed as the people to the absolutism of the Stuarts. In France the gulf between the king and the people could not be bridged. The States General, corresponding to the British Parliament, were not assembled between 1614 and 1789. The Crown was supreme; government became more and more centralised. The old local authorities, which at least had kept up

some degree of popular government in the rural districts, were gradually superseded by nominees of the Crown. Those officials "levied the taxes, regulated the militia and the police, superintended roads, bridges, and other public works, and undertook the relief of the poor." The effect of this extension of State officialism was greatly to increase the cost of local government. The first duty of the Crown officials was "to enrich the royal treasury, and they performed it with little regard to the sufferings and repugnance of the taxpayers." The result is matter of history. Kings and nobility alike vied with one another in delirious pleasure and riotous living. In order to support the wild career of extravagance, taxes were placed upon the people till they were ground to the dust with the direst poverty. As Sir Thomas Erskine May says: "While the nobles and prelates were feasting at Versailles, thousands of those wretched people were dying of hunger. Large tracts of land, deserted by the peasantry, were thrown out of cultivation. Many fled from their miseries to the provincial towns and to Paris, where a starving populace



were often driven to riots and pillage. They forced open granaries, plundered markets, and hung bakers." Where was relief from this state of matters to come? After the suppression of the Parliament, there was no constitutional channel for the expression of popular opinion. Free speech on political and social questions was impossible. Monarchical absolutism in its extremist form existed. "It is in my person alone," declared Louis XV., "that the sovereign power resides." He claimed to represent God, who had given into his keeping the sovereignty of France, and to no man was he accountable. Here, then, was the theory of Hobbes carried to its logical extreme. In England, as we have noted, the absolutism of the Stuarts was checked by Parliament under the leadership of the Whigs. In France there was no check.

Rousseau, with all his faults, had deep sympathy with the people. He was stung to the quick by the thought of their misery. On reading Hobbes and Locke he noticed that underlying their theories of absolute and limited monarchy was the idea of the sover-

eignty of the people. Both Hobbes and Locke admitted that it was from the people that sovereigns received their powers, though in the one case the powers were absolute and in the other limited. Pondering the matter, Rousseau came to the conclusion that in parting with the sovereign power originally the people had made a fatal mistake. By allowing sovereign power to get out of their own hands they had practically sold themselves to misery. "Man," said Rousseau, "was born free, and yet he is everywhere in chains." He has lost his liberty through governments, which, in the view of Rousseau, had degraded humanity. In parting with his liberty, in leaving the free and joyous state of Nature and entering into what is called Civilisation, man had really entered into a state of slavery. It is worth noticing that the political philosophy of Rousseau was quite in harmony with the new views of man and society which were being promulgated by the materialistic section as represented by Holbach. Rousseau was no materialist, but with that school he shared belief in the natural goodness of man, a belief which was a violent

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reaction, from the depravity doctrine of the Church. "The state of society," said Holbach, "is now a state of war of the sovereign against all, and each of its members against the other. Man is bad not because he was born bad, but because he is made so. The great and the powerful crush with impunity the needy and the unfortunate, and these in turn seek to repay all the evil done to them." What, then, was the duty of man? Clearly to rise against his oppressors, to overthrow iniquitous governments, as a preliminary to the creation of a new social state, in which the people would have a taste of comfort and happiness.

The moderate constitutionalism of Locke being out of the question, nothing remained for Rousseau but to take from Hobbes and Locke the two ideas of a social contract and the sovereignty of the people, strip them of the monarchical despotism of the one and the limitations and compromises of the other, and adapt them to the actual situation. Why, said Rousseau in effect, this roundabout way of government? Why should the people, after the manner of Hobbes, part with their liberty to a sovereign, and why,

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after the manner of Locke, have all the trouble of limiting the power of the sovereign? Why not avoid the evils which flow from these roundabout methods by the people simply keeping the government of the country in their own hands? No political theory could be more acceptable to the people of France at the time than the gospel according to Rousseau. Primitive man, who was a good creature on the whole, had acted foolishly in parting with his liberty. Let the people of France, in the name of humanity, take back their sovereign power. Let them make a new contract. Voltaire, who was no democrat, thought the case might be met if the rulers were enlightened. Rousseau would have none of this. He wanted the people to rule themselves, and he was all the more urgent because he thought he was bringing society back to the natural state before men had parted with their liberty. Here was no mere attempt to get rid of certain political and social grievances, no attempt after the style of Locke to secure merely an extension of political freedom. If Rousseau's gospel meant anything, it meant

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a call to the people to level to the ground existing institutions and to make a fresh start.

Rousseau wanted, not modification, but transformation. "That which," says Lecky, "distinguishes the French Revolution from other political movements is, that it was directed by men who had adopted certain speculative opinions, conceptions of political right, with the fanaticism and fervour of religious belief, and the Bible of the new creed was the 'Contrat Social' of Rousseau." Rousseau's political doctrines were singularly fortunate as regards their adaptation to the social environment. In itself the condition of France was sufficient to give them popularity, which, however, was enormously increased by the war which led to the separation of the American Colonies from Great Britain. France rushed to the help of the Colonies, thereby greatly contributing to the spread of revolutionary doctrines. Here, indeed, was dramatic application to the gospel of Rousseau. Here were a number of States deliberately breaking their chains, repudiating a contract which had enslaved them, and declaring their right to be free, and in the great

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work of emancipation America had the co-operation of the French monarchy! The dream of Rousseau had come true sooner than was expected. Those who declared Rousseau's social theories to be impracticable, had their answer in the existence of a great Republic having its foundation in freedom and equality. In the excited state of the public mind caused by the American Revolution, the new political philosophy was not likely to be subjected to much close analysis.

Rousseau's doctrines spread like an epidemic. The 'Social Contract,' as Lecky says, became the Bible of the new political school. In the words of Mr H. J. Tozer in his admirable book on Rousseau: "In the revolutionary epoch it was regarded as the 'beacon of legislators,' and was incessantly quoted as such by lawyers and publicists." "It is in all hands," said Camille Desmoulins. Taine himself tells us that in 1784 certain magistrates' sons, on taking their first lesson in jurisprudence, had the 'Social Contract' placed in their hands as a manual. It was, in fact, a political catechism for all classes, and its chief propositions were widely disseminated. We find Rousseau's

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principles embodied in the petition of the Tiers État of Nivernois, in which the people complain of "the profound ignorance of the conditions of the social pact which has perpetuated their servitude," and demand the restitution of the inalienable and imprescriptible rights of the people. In the hymn of the Twentieth Vendémiaire the people proclaimed him a true citizen, a friend of nature and of truth, and hailed him as the model of sages and the benefactor of humanity. The very thought of him aroused enthusiasm. "Jean Jacques," cried a volunteer, "oh, that thou wert a witness of our Revolution! Thou wert the precursor of it. . . . Thy writings have enlightened us." Mallet du Pan wrote that Rousseau "had a hundred times more readers than Voltaire among the middle and lower classes of society. . . . It is he alone who has inoculated the French with the doctrines of the sovereignty of the people and its most extreme consequences. I heard Marat in 1788 reading and commenting on the 'Social Contract' in the public promenades amid the plaudits of an enthusiastic audience. It would be difficult to mention a single revolutionary

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who was not transported with these anarchical theories and burning with the desire to realise them. The 'Social Contract,' the solvent of society, was the Koran of the bombastic talkers of 1789, of the Jacobins of 1790, of the Republicans of 1791, and of the most atrocious of the madmen. A thousand pamphleteers paraphrased it; the orators of the Palais Royal discoursed from it on popular sovereignty, loudly demanding the abolition of privileges and the establishment of a free democratic constitution; the club orators made it their breviary." Napoleon went the length of saying that if Rousseau had never lived there would have been no French Revolution.

It has been shown how that in the development of his political theory Rousseau was greatly influenced by Hobbes and Locke. From another source Rousseau received great influence. John Calvin lives in history mainly as the framer of a system of theology which in these latter days has lost its hold of the modern mind. But Calvin has other titles to fame. In the words of Rousseau: "Those who consider Calvin only as a theologian are but little acquainted with the extent of his



genius. The preparation of our wise edicts, in which he had a large share, does him as much credit as his 'Institutes.' Whatever revolution time may bring about in our religion, so long as love of country and of liberty is not extinct among us, the memory of that great man will not cease to be revered." It is not fanciful to trace to Calvin's theology Rousseau's conception of the primitive condition of man as that of comparative innocence and happiness. Rousseau, with Calvin, believed in the degeneracy of the race. Here the two thinkers part company. Calvin attributes the fall of man to supernatural influences, while Rousseau attributes it to civilisation and governments. Rousseau's Deism, of course, prevented him from looking like Calvin to supernatural agencies for a remedy, but throughout the 'Social Contract' are references which show that the theocratic theory of Calvin was not without attraction for Rousseau. Notwithstanding his belief in the people, Rousseau is at times conscious that, unaided, they are ill fitted for the task of framing wise laws. In his chapter dealing with legislation he has the following: "In

order to discover the rules of association that are most suitable to nations, a superior intelligence would be necessary who could see all the passions of men without experiencing any of them ; who would have no affinity with our nature and yet know it thoroughly ; whose happiness would not depend on us, and who would nevertheless be quite willing to interest himself in ours ; and lastly, one who, storing up for himself with the progress of time a far-off glory in the future, could labour in one age and enjoy in another. Gods would be necessary to give laws to men." After glancing at the theocratic idea, Rousseau, as was to be expected from his Deistic views, bases his political philosophy entirely on naturalistic conceptions.

His great watchword was the sovereignty of the people. The nature of this new contract Rousseau thus explains : " Each of us puts in common his goods, his person, his life, and all his powers, under the supreme direction of the general will, and we collectively receive each member as an undivided part of the whole." So far so good, but an important question arises, How is the general will to be ascertained? Montesquieu had no difficulty in

answering that question. He pointed to the Parliamentary system of Britain as the best method of finding the general will. But Rousseau had a rooted dislike to our Parliamentary method with its representative system. In his own words: "The English nation thinks that it is free, but is greatly mistaken, for it is so only during the elections of members of Parliament; as soon as they are elected it is enslaved and counts for nothing." As the people are sovereign the people should legislate; they cannot part with their rights to representatives who are to be treated simply as delegates. What of the Executive? Its members are allowed no independence of thought or action. As the agents of the people they are under their immediate control. Who, then, are the people who are to wield such mighty powers over the person, the property, the liberty, the religion of the State? A calm analysis of Rousseau's high-sounding language reduces his political theory to the commonplace conclusion that the people simply means the majority of the people, so that it comes to this, that in Rousseau's ideal State laws are made and executed by agents

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who are directly responsible to the people, who continually suspect them, and who can cashier them at pleasure. The leaders of the Revolutionary party were not slow in pressing into their service the gospel according to Rousseau. As the Government of France at that time was entirely out of harmony with the people, we can readily imagine the effect of a doctrine which declared the people to be the sovereign power and all the officials merely agents. Thus we find Marat, in the name of the people, the real sovereign, denouncing the king, the ministers, the administration, the bench, the bar, the financial system, and, in fact, the entire legislative and executive system. When power departed from the Monarchy and became vested in the National Assembly the full significance of the Rousseau principle of the sovereignty of the people was seen. One of Rousseau's fundamental doctrines was that the people, in the act of nominating members to office, deprived themselves of a certain amount of power. In harmony with this the National Assembly resolved that none of its members should hold ministerial office. The effect of this was most

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disastrous, and paved the way for the anarchy which followed.

By this act the National Assembly, instead of helping to govern the nation, set itself in antagonism to the existing authorities. By teaching the people that all wisdom and power sprang from them, and that their duty was to bring to account all who aspired to rule, the National Assembly created another tyranny greater and more terrible than that of the ancient *régime*—the tyranny of an anarchical majority. Voltaire long before detected the fatal flaw in Rousseau's doctrine of sovereignty. By weakening the Executive and keeping all power in the hands of the Assembly, Voltaire declared that a solemn invitation would be given to crime. If the people were sovereign, if their will was law, if the legislative and executive functions emanated from them, why should they not take all power into their own hands? In the words of Professor Graham: "The sovereign people stormed the Bastille and the world applauded; took the king and queen prisoners and killed their attendants; again invaded his palace to coerce him after the first Constitution

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was made acknowledging their sovereignty; stormed the palace; put the king in prison; itself, in exercise of its sovereign rights, acted as judge and executioner in September 1792 on the suspected prisoners; violated the sanctity of the Convention (urged on by artful leaders), and demanded the exclusion of the moderate or Gironde party. Then the purged Convention was allowed to have its own way, when it in turn became despotic, usurped the sovereign power, and put a muzzle on the sovereign people for a time. In 1795 it again rose twice, and the second time Bonaparte was called in to put it down by artillery, after which the sovereign people appeared no more on the public stage till the 'three days of July' (1830)." Rousseau was a humane man, and he would have been the first to condemn the horrors which his disciple, Robespierre, and St Just perpetrated in the name of his political philosophy. That they were fanatical interpreters of the 'Social Contract' admits of no doubt. Their public actions were based upon the teachings of that celebrated book. In the name of the 'Social Contract' Robespierre and his clique put to

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death all whose interests were opposed to the Rousseau theory of the State. Rousseau had declared that a citizen who refused to accept the recognised religion should be put to death. Robespierre only too faithfully put the writing into practice. In actual fact, the result was that whatever party managed to climb into power treated the rest as traitors to the cause of the people, and applying Rousseau's principles, ruthlessly put their foes out of the way.

The outcome of it all was that power, in the case of the extreme Jacobins, got into the hands of cliques, who, by initiating the Reign of Terror, reduced France to the level of a shambles. The situation at last became intolerable, and with the fall of Robespierre came a widespread desire to have an end of the carnival of diabolism. It is significant that Robespierre and his clique, who made themselves infamous by their Reign of Terror, began their democratic career by preaching the gospel of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. Liberty, under the reign of French democracy, became the liberty of the executioner to take off the heads of his victims; Equality became the equality of the brigand,

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with his stand and deliver; and Fraternity became the fraternity of Cain when he spilled his brother's blood upon the ground.

It is a remarkable fact that Rousseau himself seemed to have a foreboding that a situation would arise in which his gospel of democracy would fail. He contemplated a case when the usual powers were suspended, and when, in the interests of order, the public security "is provided for by a special Act, which entrusts the care of it to the most worthy man." A time came when the French people, weary of anarchy, gave up the reins of power into the hands of Napoleon as "the most worthy man." It is also a remarkable fact that Burke, who was Rousseau's most determined opponent, also reached by his prophetic insight the conclusion that the French Revolution would end in a dictatorship. Commenting on the growing influence of the Army in the later stages of the Revolution, Burke said: "In the weakness of one kind of authority, and in the fluctuation of all, the officers of an army will remain for some time mutinous and full of faction until some popular general who understands the art of conciliat-



ing the soldiery, and who possesses the true spirit of command, shall draw the eyes of all men upon himself. Armies will obey him on his personal account. There is no other way of securing military obedience in this state of things. But the moment in which that event shall happen, the person who really commands the Army is your master,—the master of your king, the master of your Assembly, the master of your whole Republic.” Thus out of Rousseau’s gospel of Liberty grew Napoleon’s gospel of Despotism, and out of the situation created by those who preached the rights of man emerged a despot who trampled alike on the rights of man and nations.

## *The British Reaction : Burke.*

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE BRITISH REACTION : BURKE.

So long as we confine our attention to the dramatic side of the French Revolution, so long as we study it exclusively from its political aspect, the full significance of that great event is missed. The inwardness of the Revolution consists in the fact that it was an intellectual as well as a political Revolution, carrying with it not only a complete change in the government of France, but also a complete change in men's fundamental ideas in regard to both society and government. Like the Reformation, the Revolution overleaped purely geographical barriers by giving birth to ideas which were universal in their sweep. Among British statesmen Burke was the first to detect the real nature of the French upheaval. According to Burke,

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it was "a revolution of doctrine and theocratic dogma." Just as the Reformation was a revolution in men's minds in regard to the ultimate seat of spiritual authority, so the French Revolution was a revolution in men's minds in regard to the ultimate seat of political authority. Up till the Reformation the watchword in matters spiritual was the Duties of Man; while till the Revolution the watchword in matters political, notbaly in France, was likewise the Duties of Man. In England the transition was gradual. Just as in the English Reformation compromise ruled the day—the idea of national spiritual freedom vindicated its right to exist along with the idea of spiritual authority—so in the political sphere, thanks to the compromising nature of Locke's philosophy, the Revolution of 1688 found room for the idea of liberty alongside of the idea of authority. Britain did not find it necessary to abolish the symbol of authority, the Monarchy, in order to find room for liberty, whose symbol is democracy. The ideas which Locke propagated had a different effect, as we have seen, when transplanted into France. There authority and liberty

came into violent conflict, and the French Revolution was the result. Rousseau confronted the theocratic watchwords of Romanism and Feudalism—namely, the Duties of Man—with the democratic watchword the Rights of Man. This is what Burke meant by saying that the French Revolution was “a revolution of doctrine and theocratic dogma.”

We have seen what Rousseau meant by the Rights of Man. Far from being a clear thinker, Rousseau sometimes writes as if he meant to imply, with Locke, that man had certain rights, such as the right of property, in his natural state antecedent to government; at other times—and in fact this is the outcome of his political philosophy—he identifies the Rights of Man with the sovereignty of the people. This high-sounding phrase when translated into political fact simply means government by majority. Why should the majority be the ultimate seat of power and authority? In the nature of things such a seat of authority can have no justification. It simply means that in order to decide where power should exist, people take to count-

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ing heads instead of breaking heads. The minority, instead of deciding the question by physical force, recognise that physical force rests with the 'majority' and peaceably acquiesce in the fact. In this democratic idea of Rousseau there lurks the despotic idea of Hobbes—namely, the rule of the strongest. With the king as head of the Army, it seemed clear to Hobbes that the duty of the people lay in submission to the commands of the monarch. Get rid of the king, as was done in France, give the majority full command of the Army, and individual liberties are no safer under an absolute democracy than under an absolute monarchy. The close connection between the despotic nature of the theories of Hobbes and Rousseau is happily expressed by Mr Morley when he says: "Strike the crowned head from that monstrous figure which is the frontispiece of the Leviathan, and you will have a frontispiece which will do admirably well for the Social Contract." Thus we reach the strange conclusion that in its last analysis the Rousseau doctrines of the Sovereignty of the People and the Rights of Man resolve

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themselves into the view that in the long-run political power rests upon physical power, which, as a rule, rests with the majority. But, as Herbert Spencer shrewdly observes, if "there is nothing to prevent a majority from imposing its will on a minority by force, then the superior force of a despot, backed by an adequate army, is also justified." The logic of events in France showed the truth of Spencer's observation and justified the remarkable prediction of Burke: "If the present project of a Republic should fail, a security to a modern freedom will fail with it,—all the indirect restraints which mitigate despotism are removed; insomuch that if Monarchy should ever again obtain an entire ascendancy in France, under this or any other dynasty, it will probably be, if not voluntary, tempered at setting out by the wise and virtuous counsels of the prince, the most completely arbitrary power that ever appeared on earth." Thus it came about that Rousseau unconsciously prepared the way for the appearance of Napoleon.

At the same time, it is permissible to argue that if France had been allowed to solve her

own problems after the execution of Louis, as England was allowed to solve hers after the execution of Charles, without foreign intervention, the events which called forth Napoleon would not have arisen. Napoleon came as the appointed scourge of the European Powers for their intervention in the internal affairs of France, with which they had nothing whatever to do, and also as the appointed scourge of France for its all too literal acceptance of, and obedience to, the anarchic doctrines which lurked in Rousseau's political philosophy. For the European intervention Burke was largely, if not mainly, responsible. He it was who counselled war upon France with ruthless fury and bigotry. He imported into his denunciation of Rousseauism a passionate hatred which has no counterpart since the wildest days of religious persecution. Burke's hatred of the French Revolution rested not merely on his dread of the anarchy into which he foresaw France would be plunged ; it was due also to the antagonism of a thinker who saw in the doctrine of the Rights of Man the appearance of a political principle which, if not arrested in its source, would weaken the

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very foundation of civilisation. In Burke, therefore, we have the embodiment, the incarnation, of the spirit of reaction. His writings became the text-book of Toryism, which in this country and on the Continent got a new lease of power as the result of the terrible excesses of the French Revolution. With Burke the thinker the reaction began in the region of ideas, though, thanks to his passionate prompting, it ultimately became a war in reality, with appeal to the arbitrament of blood. It is, however, with the political philosophy of Burke, as gleaned from his writings on the French Revolution, that we have principally to do. Just as Hobbes was the political philosopher of the Stuart absolutism, Locke of the Revolution of 1688, Rousseau of the French Revolution, so Burke was the political philosopher of the reaction ; and just as the political theories of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau grew out of a definite theory of society, so Burke's political theories with which he attacks the Revolution have their roots also in a definite theory of society.

As was to be expected, Burke's ideas of



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the nature of society and government are at the antipodes of those of Rousseau. For purposes of analyses and exposition the student of Burke labours under a great disadvantage. He was not a systematic thinker. He was no drawing-room philosopher. He was a man of affairs roused to a white heat by a revolution which in his eyes was a colossal eruption of evil. He has no time for metaphysical inquiry into the origin of society? He can barely tolerate discussion of the Rights of Man in the abstract. As he says, he hated the very sound of abstract discussion about society. In some parts he writes as if he recognises no test of government but utility; at other times he is quite in agreement with his opponents that the Rights of Man do exist. In the main, Burke's concern is not with any abstract rights which man as man apart from society may possess, but with the claim of rights under which the revolutionists proceeded to cashier the existing French Government, and to construct the entire political edifice from the foundation. However society may have arisen, Burke holds that the existing societies into which men

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are born exist as parts of a divine scheme. Both our rights and our duties are determined for us, not by any fiction of a social contract in which men enter of their own option, but by the circumstances into which we are born. He says: "The awful Author of our being is the Author of our place in the order of existence; and having disposed and marshalled us by a divine tactic, not according to our will but according to His, He has in and by that disposition virtually subjected us to act the part which belongs to the place assigned to us." In other words, we find ourselves members of a society without any so-called covenant or contract on our part, but by the decree of a divine power. To talk, therefore, of the Rights of Man as if they carried with them the right to alter fundamentally the entire social order into which we are born, is, according to Burke, to make warfare against the divine will. This looks very like the old Tory doctrine that the people are to be content with the place which Providence has assigned them, to be obedient to their superiors, and to have no social or political aspirations whatever. Burke allows

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room in his theory for progress, but considering that he eulogised the British Constitution of his day as a monument of perfection, it is not clear what he really meant by progress.

In a word, Burke's theory is simply a gigantic piece of political Popery, and he himself a kind of political Cardinal Newman. Newman believed that the individual reason when left to itself led to Atheism—to spiritual anarchy. In like manner, Burke believed that in politics the individual reason when left to itself led to Jacobinism—to political anarchy. To the men of his time Newman offered the Roman Catholic Church as a refuge from spiritual anarchy, and Burke saw no hope for society, no antidote to political anarchy, but in the British Constitution. Newman had no faith in the individual reason in the search for truth, and in like manner Burke thought that in political matters truth was difficult to reach. In that case, men as members of society should place greater store upon peace than truth. Newman held that in matters of religion everything should be done for the multitude, but nothing by them.

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Hence for guidance they were to look to the Roman Catholic Church. Burke had little faith in the multitude, and, like Newman, he warned them against trusting to reason, which was, in his view, a disintegrating force. Where Newman in religion sent the multitude to a Church, Burke sent them to a Constitution. The watchword of the one was Tradition; the watchword of the other was Proscription. In place of the Roman Catholic Church he puts the British Constitution, and for the democratic theory of the Rights of Man he serves up the old theocratic theory of the Duties of Man. Here is Burke's confession of political faith: "We fear God; we look up with awe to kings, with affection to Parliament, with duty to magistrates, with reverence to priests, and with respect to nobility. We think that no discoveries are to be made in morality, nor many in the principles of government. . . . We are resolved to keep our established Church, our established monarchy, our established aristocracy, our established democracy, each in the degree it exists and in no greater." His eulogies of the British Constitution were in-

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tended to be something more than a confession of faith. Burke's aim has been well expressed by the late Sir James Fitzjames Stephen as follows :—"The glories of the British Constitution, the absolute satisfaction of the British nation in its perfection, and the magnificence of its results, are fruits held up to the admiration of the French with a contemptuous 'Go and do thou likewise,' and with a pitying admonition to the effect that they might have done likewise."

Just as Roman Catholicism confronted the Reformation with the idea of a divinely conceived and divinely organised Church for the spiritual guidance of man, so Burke confronted the Revolution with a divinely conceived and divinely organised British Constitution for the political guidance of man. And just as Roman Catholicism railed at the Reformation as the offspring of evil and the creator of evils, so Burke railed at the Revolution as the offspring of evil and the creator of social anarchy. Again, just as Roman Catholicism thought it a part of its divine mission to put down religious heresy by means of the Inquisition, so Burke thought it part of his

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appointed mission to call upon the European Powers to stamp out the great Revolution heresy by means of armies. Burke's political Papacy, like its great original, ends in persecution. In essence the Reformation which the Papacy strove to put down was an uprising of the democratic idea of rights as opposed to the theocratic idea of duties, which had resulted in sheer spiritual despotism. In like manner the Revolution, when viewed apart from its hideous excesses, was an uprising of the democratic idea of rights as opposed to the monarchical idea of duties, which in France had ended in an intolerable despotism. Notwithstanding the splendour of Burke's genius, the sweep of his mind, and the commanding generalisations which stud his writings, the truth must be admitted that the effect of his indiscriminating eulogy of the British Constitution, and his indiscriminating denunciation of the French Revolution, combined with the long war which he was instrumental in starting, was to throw discredit on all attempts at political reform, and greatly to prolong in this country the reign of despotism.

The extraordinary passion which Burke

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threw "into his opposition to the French Revolution created an epidemic of fear and hatred in the minds of the governing classes of this country." Before the Revolution circumstances were favourable to the plea of political development. At the time of Pitt the troubles which had disturbed the reigns of the early Hanoverian dynasties had died away, and the country was in a mood to turn its attention to political and social reform. Pitt was liberal minded enough to recognise the necessity for a scheme of Parliamentary reform, and his study of the 'Wealth of Nations' had disposed him to Adam Smith's Free Trade doctrines. Not only did the excesses of the French Revolution and the panic created by Burke's writings drive all ideas of reform out of the mind of Pitt, but he was driven by the force of public opinion into a course of legislation at once despotic and reactionary. In the course of his denunciation of the French Revolution Burke found it necessary to eulogise the British Constitution as existing in a state of perfection. To touch it in the direction of reform was impiety; to attempt reconstruction after the manner of

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France was treason. This opposition to any reform of the Constitution, this denial of any necessity for the widening of the franchise, unfortunate at this juncture, was particularly unfortunate in face of the fact that the country was face to face with another revolution, an industrial revolution, which was calculated to obliterate the old political landmarks. That revolution, by calling into existence large centres of industry, was so shifting the population as to render the old system of Parliamentary representation glaringly anomalous. In order to realise the state of affairs, it may be well to contrast Burke's eulogisms of the British Constitution with the existing condition of Parliamentary representation.

In his 'History of England,' Spencer Walpole gives a bird's-eye view of the situation. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the House of Commons contained 658 members. Of these 489 were returned by England, 100 by Ireland, 45 by Scotland, and 24 by Wales. So unequal was the distribution of political power that a little more than a fourth of the population returned nearly one-



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half of the whole House of Commons, but this gives a very inadequate idea of the existing anomalies. Scotland, with a population of nearly two millions, returned 45 members, while Cornwall, with a population of rather more than a quarter of a million, returned 44 members. That was bad enough, but the situation was rendered more glaringly anomalous by the fact that the representation of the various towns bore no relation to the number of electors. It was stated that the majority of the House of Commons was elected by less than 15,000 electors. Seventy members were elected by thirty-four places, in which it would be absurd to say the people had any voice in the matter, the election being merely a matter of form. Two hundred and ninety-four members, being a majority of the entire House of Commons in 1793, were returned by constituencies none of which had 250, and in the great majority of which there were not 100 voters. Old Sarum had two members, but no inhabitant; while Gatton, with seven electors, had two members. The county of Bute at one time had only one voter, who took the chair, proposed and

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seconded his own return, and announced his unanimous election. In all Scotland there were not 4000 voters. As has been stated, the majority of the House of Commons was returned by 15,000 electors, but the share the electors had in the elections was purely nominal, as may be gathered from the fact that 172 of the English and Welsh members were nominated by the Treasury, and 130 owed their return to the illegitimate influence of the Treasury or their powerful friends. The 45 Scottish members, for instance, were nominated by 35 persons. So great was the power and influence of the great landowners that a huge system of barter existed under which seats were bought and sold.

This was the state of Parliamentary representation which Burke declared to be perfect, and which upon no account should be tampered with. The implication was that the awful horrors in France had been caused by the introduction of the people into the sphere of government; therefore, if these horrors were not to be extended to this country, the Constitution as it existed was the only satisfactory breakwater. Out of what may be

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called this huge political monopoly grew grievous evils, which were not only the outcome of the reaction, but which greatly increased the reaction.\* The long revolutionary war loaded the nation with taxation, a part of which fell upon the landed interests. The war had been favourable to the landowners in as far as it kept up the price of corn, as from the nature of the case the people, as a result of hostilities, were dependent on the home supply. With the close of the war came a fall in prices, and the landowners became alarmed about their rents. They must be protected, because, it was argued, if rents fall land will be thrown out of cultivation, men will be thrown out of work, and not only the landed but all other interests will be ruined. In fairness to the aristocracy, they are not wholly to be blamed for the protective legislation which was instituted after the close of the war. True, such legislation came naturally to a House of Commons dominated by the landed element, but it must be remembered that the political economists of the time still clung to the old Protection theory which Adam

Smith's great work had not yet had time to demolish. Backed by theorists, the landed interest thought they were doing a good thing for the country, as well as for themselves, in keeping up the price of corn by prohibiting its importation. Upon the people the result of the high price of food was disastrous in the extreme. The country was flooded with paupers, whose numbers were greatly increased by a system of poor law relief which actually put a premium on pauperism. In some places it is stated that at times the whole labouring part of the population was thrown on the rates. An idea of the terrible state of affairs may be judged from a speech of Lord Byron in the House of Lords in 1812, when he said: "I have traversed the seat of war in the Peninsula, I have been in some of the most oppressed provinces of Turkey, but never under the most despotic of infidel governments have I beheld such squalid wretchedness as I have seen since residing in the heart of a Christian country." It is stated that in Edinburgh one in every eight of the population was maintained on charity,

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and the amount of bread which each pauper was expected to consume was regulated by proclamation of the magistrate. It was much the same in other parts of the country.

Christianity, alas! as represented by the Church of England, did nothing to lessen—rather the reverse—the sufferings of the people. The French Revolution, as interpreted by Burke, had associated in the minds of the governing classes political agitation and atheism. Had not Paine, the great antagonist of Burke, the great defender of the Revolution, not content in his ‘Rights of Man’ with attacking Monarchy, gone the length in his ‘Age of Reason’ of waging war against the Church? Clearly the cause of the Monarchy and the Church must stand or fall together. The Test Act, which had been passed to exclude the Roman Catholics from office, was found in operation to exclude all Nonconformists. Efforts had been made to get the Act abolished. Burke at one time had seconded the efforts of Fox in this direction; but when it became clear that prominent dissenters like

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the famous Dr Price were ardent admirers of the Revolution, and were denounced by Burke, all attempts to shake the supremacy of the Church of England were seen to be hopeless; indeed Burke himself opposed relief to the dissenters. Moreover, the alliance between Church and State, which Burke considered essential to the nation's safety, was rendered closer than ever by the Corn Laws, which, by increasing the rents of the landowners, also raised the incomes of the clergy, who were dependent on the tithes, which, of course, rose in value with the increase in the rents. Thus it happened that in the years that immediately followed the close of the great war the people of this country found themselves ruled by two despotisms, the one political, the other ecclesiastical. They had no voice in a Government which, by its legislation, had increased the price of their food, and which, by maintaining religious monopoly to a Church, inflicted great practical grievances upon all who chose to be dissenters. To add to the distress caused by class legislation, came in 1816 the failure of the harvest. The cup of suffering was now filled to over-

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flowing, the results of which were disturbances and riots all over the country. Out of the social distress emerged political agitation. Radicalism, imbued with the principles of the French Revolution, began to rebel against the existing state of things, and in turn the Government resolved upon the most stringent repressive measures.

There were passed what were known as the "Six Acts," by which the liberty of the press, the liberty of public meetings, and all attempts at political agitation, were ruthlessly put down. In Edinburgh, for instance, no political meeting had been held for more than twenty years. As Lord Cockburn says, everything was soaked with the Revolution. The Bench, where something like judicial impartiality was to be expected, was converted into a huge engine of political despotism. The most glaring instance was the trial and conviction of an Edinburgh advocate, Thomas Muir, who was transported for attempting to form political associations. The notorious Lord Braxfield, who tried the case, in words which Burke would have endorsed, declared the British Constitution to be the best that ever was since the creation of

the world. Mr Spencer Walpole has concisely summarised the condition of affairs in the years after Waterloo: "During the first few years which succeeded Waterloo Englishmen enjoyed less real liberty than at any time since the Revolution of 1688. The great majority of the people had no voice in the Legislature. Political power was in the hands of a few fortunate individuals, who were bent on retaining the monopoly which they had secured. The taxpayers were laden with fiscal burdens which were both unequal and ill-devised. Death was the punishment which the law awarded to the gravest and most trivial crimes. The pauper was treated as a criminal, and the administration of the Poor Laws made almost every labourer a pauper. Harsh and oppressive as the laws already were, the oligarchy by which England was governed was continually demanding harsher and more oppressive legislation. During the five years which succeeded Waterloo the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended; the liberty of the Press was restricted; the right of public meeting was denied; domiciliary visits in search of arms were allowed." The



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effect of all this was to give an impetus to the cause of reform. The ideas of the Revolution could not be stamped out, and in spite of the despotic acts of the Government the people eagerly read the literature which emanated from the ranks of the reformers. Burke had created the reaction by his book on the French Revolution. The reforming party knew full well the influence of Burke, and that their cause would make no headway till an answer was forthcoming. An answer came from the pen of Thomas Paine, who, by his pamphlets 'Common-sense' and 'The Crisis,' had been largely instrumental in bringing about the American Revolution. Paine stepped into the arena against Burke with his 'Rights of Man,'—a book which, as the political Bible of early British Radicalism, demands careful study by those who would understand the course of political development.

## *The Rights of Man*

### CHAPTER IV.

#### THE RIGHTS OF MAN.

THANKS to the excesses of the Revolution and the great influence of the writings of Burke, the doctrines of the revolutionary school fell into utter discredit. Those who were bent upon reform were handicapped at the outset by the public aversion to a political theory whose practical outcome seemed to be social anarchy. No progress could be made till an answer was given to Burke. The answer came from Thomas Paine. Paine, like his contemporaries, was taken by surprise by the attitude of Burke, whose writings on the American Revolution were remembered with admiration and gratitude by the progressive school. Paine could hardly believe that the man who was the staunch friend of the American Colonies in their battle for freedom

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should denounce with volcanic force the people of France in their attempts to free themselves from a yoke more galling than that under which the American Colonies suffered. When it was made clear that Burke was the main instrument in producing a reaction in the public mind, Paine lost no time in the endeavour to counteract his influence. Paine's answer to Burke is contained in his once famous 'Rights of Man.' The question was the old one which exercised the minds of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau—namely, the question of Sovereignty. In all societies there must exist an ultimate authority. What is that ultimate authority? Rousseau, as we saw, found it in the sovereignty of the people. Burke, as we also saw, based the ultimate authority on Prescription. He refused to trace the social order to metaphysical first principles. He believed in the wisdom of our ancestors, as embodied in the British Constitution, with its kings, clergy, lords, and commons. In the previous chapter it was shown how ludicrous was Burke's eulogy of the British Constitution when contrasted with the actual distribution of political power.

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Apart from that, the ideas of Burke could not but be particularly abhorrent to Paine, whose mind was saturated with the fundamental beliefs of the eighteenth century revolutionary school—namely, that society had been corrupted by two great superstitions, Monarchy and Priesthood.

Paine saw no hope for society till mankind got rid of the two great despotisms, hereditary monarchy and established clergy. 'The Rights of Man' was directed against the one and 'The Age of Reason' against the other. With the former we have here particularly to do. It never occurred to Paine and the revolutionary thinkers that monarchs and churches were not the products of designing men, but were the natural outcome of particular environments. The eighteenth century thinkers had not reached the evolutionary conception that institutions which to one age seem to be intolerable were quite suited to a previous age, and though, from an absolute point of view, indefensible, were relatively justifiable as the best under the circumstances. Recognition of this truth would have saved Paine from the violent denunciations of ancient

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institutions which disfigure his pages. After due allowance is made for the narrowness of his outlook, there is much in Paine which demands the attention of the student of political theories. It is a mistake to put down Paine as a mere populariser in this country of the views of Rousseau. As a matter of fact, he was a clearer and more consistent thinker than Rousseau, whose political thinking is marked by serious confusion of ideas. In some parts of his book Rousseau seems to agree with Locke as to the necessity of society guarding the rights of property; in other parts he places so much emphasis on the sovereignty of the people as to have no room for individual rights, thus paving the way for the anarchical idea that the rights of the individual are entirely at the mercy of the majority. Burke had no difficulty in combating this dangerous doctrine, but he entirely failed to establish a true theory of society. In fact, his own view, when reduced to its last analysis, was quite as irrational as that of Rousseau, inasmuch as he resolved the rights of man into the duties of man towards the powers which had been placed over him by

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a mysterious Providence, as symbolised in Britain by the State and the Church.

Paine differed fundamentally from both Rousseau and Burke. To him we owe the first clear distinction between society and government. Government with Rousseau, and indeed with Hobbes and Locke, rose out of a social compact; or, in other words, society was the deliberate creation of governments. Now it was the merit of Paine to show that society grows spontaneously out of the nature of man. Men did not, as with Rousseau, exist first as isolated individuals, who in a moment of folly allowed themselves to be pressed into a society and governed by despots. Nor was mankind divided, with Burke, in some mysterious fashion into governors and governed, in which the duty of the latter was to accept as the decree of Providence the arrangement which was known as the British Constitution,—an arrangement which made kings, lords (temporal and spiritual), and commons a divinely instituted order. Compared with Rousseau and Burke, Paine, in his handling of the subject, may be described as a scientific thinker. In the words

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of Paine: "A great part of that order which reigns among mankind is not the effect of government. It had its origin in the principles of society and the natural constitution of man. It existed prior to government, and would exist if the formality of government was abolished. The mutual dependence and reciprocal interest which man has in man, and all the parts of a civilised community upon each other, create that great chain of connection which holds it together. . . . Government is nothing more than a national association acting on the principles of society." What, then, is the function of government? Clearly its function cannot be to confer sovereignty on the people, which means the majority, from which the individuals receive their rights.

If Paine's conception of society is correct, and it is corroborated by historical research, the individual as such has certain rights which can neither be bestowed nor taken away by a despotic monarch or a despotic majority. What, then, are those rights? Let us listen to Paine: "Natural rights are those which always pertain to man in right of his existence. Of this

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kind are all the intellectual rights, or rights of the mind, and also all those rights of acting as an individual for his own comfort and happiness which are not injurious to the rights of others." Man, as man, has a natural right to live, to think, to labour, and to retain the products of his labour. It follows from this that no government, be it monarchic, aristocratic, or democratic—the rule of one, the rule of a favoured few, or the majority—has the right to interfere with individual freedom in the physical, intellectual, or industrial realms, unless it can be shown that such freedom is being used to the injury of others. Civil rights grow naturally out of natural rights. Man, for instance, has a natural right to the products of his labour, but what avails that right if he is too weak to protect himself against those who would forcibly rob him? In order to obtain security, he, therefore, abstains from using his natural right of defence, and gives it over to society, which, in the form of a competent executive, guarantees law and order. In this case, what the man as an individual has a natural right to do—to defend his property from attack—but



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cannot do, is done by society. In this way arise civil rights. As Paine puts it: "The civil power, properly considered as such, is made up of the aggregate of that class of the natural rights of man which become defective in the individual in point of power and answers not his purpose, but when collected to a focus becomes competent to the purpose of every one." In a society composed of reasonable, liberty-loving, and justice-loving individuals, natural and civil rights would work in harmony; but inasmuch as men are imperfect and greedy of power over their fellows, there is always a tendency in governments to use the power which they possess to guarantee and preserve the rights of the individual for the purpose of curtailing those rights. The question which arises is this—Under what form of government can the rights of man best be respected?

Paine treats with scorn Burke's veneration for hereditary rulers. You might as well, says Paine, talk of hereditary mathematicians as of hereditary kings. Equally scornful for the same reason is he of government through hereditary peers. As for the Church of Eng-

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land, which Burke treated as a part of the great providential scheme, Paine can hardly speak of it with decent respect. Government by priestcraft Paine looked upon as possibly the worst form of government, as it meant, in the first instance, the enslavement of the mind. It is easy to understand the importance which men of the type of Paine, Godwin, and Priestley attached to the French Revolution. To them it meant more than the uprising of the people against their oppressors: it meant the overthrow of two things, which in their view had kept the human race in a state of deplorable stagnation — namely, loyalty in politics and superstition in religion. Thanks to loyalty, mankind had prostrated themselves before monarchs who, in the name of divine right, had deprived them of everything pertaining to freedom; and, thanks to superstition, mankind had prostrated themselves before priests who, also in the name of divine right, had reduced their dupes to mental and spiritual slavery. At what he deemed the great political superstition, Paine aimed a blow by his ‘Rights of Man,’ and at the great religious superstition

he aimed a blow by his 'Age of Reason.' Out of the chaos produced by the overthrow of thrones and churches Paine saw arising a new world—a world of reason and justice, in which every man would sit under his own vine and fig-tree, secure in the possession of his natural rights, no king, aristocrat, or priest daring to make him afraid. The violence of Paine's writings has so prejudiced readers that much of their truth has been ignored, if not rejected, with contempt. Paine shared the view which was prevalent among the Revolution thinkers of his time, that governments originated and were carried on by imposture and fraud. Man had been cheated out of his natural rights by scheming monarchs and designing priests. All would go well when mankind sent kings and priests about their business.

Such revolutionary ideas were the result of a totally erroneous view of the origin of society. Kingship was not an imposition which was foisted upon an ignorant people; kingship grew naturally out of the circumstances in which primitive societies found themselves. Primitive societies had other

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things to think of than how to preserve the rights of man. That was a question which had to be postponed till another more urgent question was answered.—How to preserve the very existence of the tribe? Comte and Spencer have familiarised us with the luminous idea that, for purposes of study, the history of man is divisible into two parts, under the terms Militarism and Industrialism. Hobbes had hold of an aspect of truth when he declared that the early state of man was a state of war. The warfare, however, was not so much as Hobbes thought, between individual men, as between tribes. In primitive times war was an economic necessity. Owing to man's ignorance of Nature, subsistence does not keep pace with increase of population, consequently appropriation of new territory becomes a necessity of tribal existence. This, of course, means war. Given a tribe or nation which by economic necessity is compelled to organise itself along military lines, and a political constitution will evolve along the same lines.

Where prosperity is believed to be due to forcible appropriation of territory, everything

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will be sacrificed to military efficiency. The Army will simply be the nation mobilised, industry will be exploited in the interest of war, and as a natural and necessary consequence the individual will be subordinated to the State. Under such circumstances it is idle to talk of the rights of man. Obedience is the chief virtue. The democratic form of government appropriate to the Age of Reason in presence of external foes gives place to a military dictatorship. The individual has no rights against the State. His property, nay, his very life, belongs to the State. Out of this condition of things arise, naturally, monarchic and aristocratic government, which Paine and his school attributed to fraud and imposture. Burke saw the truth to which Paine was blind, that institutions are not to be judged by their harmony with abstract reason, but by the circumstances in which they have originated and developed. Where Burke erred was in not recognising that the British Constitution in its then form had outlived its usefulness, and that in order to meet the new conditions which were arising great and far-reaching reforms were necessary.

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In regard to the Church, Paine made the same mistake as he had made in reference to monarchy. Churches, according to Paine, were used by the clergy to humbug the common people and keep them in a state of bondage. Primitive man was not religious because he was humbugged into religion by designing priests. The real truth is, priests, churches, and primitive man were alike religious because religion is a part of man's nature. The particular form which religion took in early times was not due to fraud and imposture, but to circumstances. Spencer's theory of ancestor worship may not cover all the facts, but there is enough truth in it to justify the statement that in its earliest manifestation the feeling of loyalty to the chief and worship of him when he died were so closely connected that what are called Church and State were not two separate institutions, but simply different aspects of the national life. In the case of a departed chief, two feelings arose—the desire to do him honour and a desire to secure his favour. Out of this sprang sacred places. His tomb grows into a temple, the tomb itself becomes an

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altar, upon which provisions are placed — a custom which is the germ of religious oblations and festivals. Closely connected with this are propitiatory sacrifices as a means of securing the favour of the deified chief in battle. J. S. Mill puts the case admirably when he says: "The very first demand of the social union, obedience to a government of some sort, has not been found so easy a thing to establish in this world. The difficulty of inducing a brave, warlike race to submit their individual 'arbitrium' to any common umpire has always been felt to be so great, that nothing short of supernatural power has been deemed adequate to overcome it, and such tribes have always assigned to the first institution of civilisation a divine origin." In other words, governments in the early days of society naturally and spontaneously take the theocratic form.

The generation which Paine addressed, of course, were as ignorant as himself of the real origin of primitive customs, and of the mode of evolution of the feelings of religion and loyalty, but they had an instinctive aversion to his method of attack. They could perhaps

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give no answer to him which would satisfy a strictly logical mind, but none the less they felt that however monarchy and priesthood had arisen, they had their uses, and, at any rate, were preferable to an age of Reason, which began in France by abolishing kings and priests, and ended by inaugurating, not the Millennium, but Pandemonium. It is deeply to be regretted that Paine's contribution to political philosophy was mixed up with theories which had no foundation in history, and which had the effect of clouding his reputation and greatly damaging his influence. It is no slight testimony to the mental insight of Paine to say that his theory of natural rights, which fell into discredit, has been revived by German thinkers, and by Herbert Spencer, who, by way of the evolution philosophy, reaches conclusions which Paine reached as a political pamphleteer. Paine's book, utterly detested by the governing classes of his time, had an enormous sale among the people. Still, its influence was greatly damaged by the excesses of the French Revolution. The cause of reform got a set-back in two ways. The French Revolu-



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tion was supposed to discredit utterly the doctrine of the Rights of Man, and Paine's attack on religion had the effect of associating reform with infidelity, thereby greatly aiding the reaction. It was clear that if progress was to be made, a new method of attack on existing institutions would need to be found. The old watchwords of the progressive party would have to be discarded and others found which would cause less opposition in the British mind. The cause of reform found a new leader in Jeremy Bentham, who, discarding the watchword of the Rights of Man, rallied the forces of reform round a new watchword—Utilitarianism.

## CHAPTER V.

### BENTHAM AND THE UTILITARIANS.

THE English mind has a proverbial dislike of first principles. It was this characteristic that to a great extent prevented the principles of the French Revolution from taking deep root in this country. No doubt, terror at the excesses of the Revolution was the dominant feeling in people's minds, but along with that was the erroneousness of applying the purely metaphysical and deductive method to politics. In this matter the genius of Burke was more congenial to the English mind than the genius of Paine. Burke saw plainly the folly of attempts to construct political systems after geometrical patterns, and it was because the results of the Revolution read like a fulfilment of his predictions that his influence over his contemporaries was so great. Effect-

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ive as a destructive force in the realm of revolutionary ideas, Burke had no constructive theory with which to face the new commercial and industrial conditions which were rendering the British Constitution not only antiquated but dangerously obstructive. How was reform to be effected? Paine's methods, powerful enough in inflaming the popular discontent, did not commend themselves to the national temperament. The hour for reform, as distinguished from revolution, had come, and with it the man. In some ways Jeremy Bentham was quite as revolutionary as Paine. Both had the mental characteristics of the eighteenth century. Bentham, like Paine, was totally deficient in the historic sense. Looking back upon the long record of man's strivings, they could see nothing to admire: nothing to them was visible but a chaotic mass of barbarism, despotism, and superstition. D'Alembert well represents the attitude of eighteenth century advanced thinkers when he expresses the wish that all records whatever of past events could be blotted out. Burke wrote eloquently of the wisdom of our ancestors. Bentham would

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have none of it. His attitude is well expressed in some of his forcible remarks: "From foolish opinion comes foolish conduct, from foolish conduct serious disasters, and from serious disasters the most useful warning. It is from the folly, not from the wisdom, of our ancestors that we have so much to learn."

In their attitude towards the past, Rousseau, Paine, and Bentham were at one. It might have been thought that to the English mind Bentham would have been as distasteful as Rousseau and Paine. How was it that Bentham came to found a school, which in point of contempt for the past and denunciation of the present political conditions was, if anything, more fierce and sweeping than any of the revolutionary school? The answer is to be found in the fact that his method of approach to politics differed entirely from the revolutionary school with the famous Declaration of the Rights of Man. It was something new for the ruling classes of this country to hear a furious reformer not only opposing but ridiculing a doctrine which had been made, so to speak,

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the intellectual pivot of the French Revolution. For instance, Bentham described as so much "jargon" the American Declaration of Independence. The abstract Rights of Man theory he described as a "hodge-podge" of fallacies. Bentham declared war against the current catchwords in ethics and politics. For instance, under his elaborate analysis the ethical words right and wrong resolved themselves into pleasure and pain, and in politics such phrases as liberty, the law of Nature, and the Social Compact, for him had no meaning apart from the greatest happiness of the greatest number. In his eyes the phrase "natural rights" was as objectionable as the phrase "moral sense." He would bring everything in ethics and politics to the touchstone of utility. Bentham did not, with Burke, believe that the antiquity of our Constitution gave it a prescriptive right to veneration, nor, with Paine and Godwin, that it was deserving of destruction because it was not rooted in the natural rights of man. Did or did not the Constitution so work in practice as to contribute to the general happiness?

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That, for Bentham, was the fundamental question.

Bentham began his reforming work in the sphere of law. Here he did great things. He had no regard for precedent; he brought to the legal world of his time no metaphysical abstractions; he tested them, not by a law of nature, but solely by their effect upon the general wellbeing. Utility was his test, and by means of it he revolutionised our law system. On this point the testimony of Sir Henry Maine is conclusive: "I do not know a single law reform effected since Bentham's day which cannot be traced to his influence. It is impossible to overrate the importance to a nation or profession of having a distinct object to aim at in the pursuit of improvement. The secret of Bentham's unique influence in England was his success in placing such an object before the country. He gave us a clear rule of reform, . . . made the good of the community take precedence of every other object, and thus gave escape to a current which had long been trying to find its way outward." In other words, Bentham converted the spirit of progress, which in the

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hands of the revolutionary party was mainly abstract in theory and destructive in effect, into a principle of practical reform. It was natural that Bentham should apply his principle of utility to government as well as to ethics and law. The revolutionists failed to catch the public ear because they averred that, as a preliminary to a rational, social, and political order, existing institutions should be swept away. The experiment of France was not reassuring. Bentham gained a hearing because, unlike Burke, he saw that existing institutions were obstructing national progress, and, unlike Rousseau and his followers, he sought not to destroy them but to bring them into harmony with the new condition of things. Let us see, then, how he applied the great principle of utility to the problem of government. With the British Constitution as it existed in his day Bentham had no patience. The actual Government of England in 1817 he described as an "aristocracy-ridden monarchy," combining all the evils of both, and totally unworthy of the eulogies of Burke and Blackstone. The rulers of England did not legislate for the

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greatest happiness of the greatest number. Their interest was what Bentham calls a "sinister interest," the interest of a class — not of the nation. Clearly there was no remedy for this state of matters short of some scheme by which the interests of the governors and governed would be identical.

Human beings in the mass being mainly guided by self-interest, it follows that in a monarchy the ruler's interest is that of one — himself; in a limited monarchy the interests are those of a limited privileged class; in a democracy the end aimed at is the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Here, then, according to Bentham, is the solution of the political problem. Sovereignty must rest somewhere. If it is not safe in the hands of monarchs, not even where their power is limited by a body of aristocrats, where is it safe? Bentham is bound to say: With the people, the greatest number, whose happiness is the end of all government. Bentham seemed to think that the people, whose interests were happiness, would have no sinister interests. But who are the people, and how are their wishes to be dis-



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covered? By means of universal suffrage, in which Bentham thoroughly believed. In practice, that means that in place of government by one or the 'few', there was to be government by the many,—in other words, government by the numerical majority. So that by a roundabout path we reach the old Rousseauan doctrine of the Sovereignty of the People. The utilitarian theory of Bentham joins hands with the natural right theory of Rousseau. If there are no such things as natural rights,—if the majority are sovereign,—are we not in danger of being governed by an unlimited despotism? In his famous essay on Bentham, John Stuart Mill points to the extreme peril to society of such a theory of politics.

An important point here emerges. If there is no such thing as natural rights, if utility is the fundamental test of government, clearly any rights that exist must be the creation of the majority, and here, too, we unexpectedly come back to the theory of Rousseau. Let us examine this theory closely. According to Bentham, Government fulfils its office by "creating rights which it confers on indi-

viduals : rights of personal security ; rights of protection for honour ; rights of property," &c. That is to say, the people appoint representatives, and so create a government which creates rights, which it proceeds to confer on the separate members of the sovereign people, who were the original creators of the Government. Bentham does more than lay down a general political theory. To say that the aim of legislation is the greatest happiness of the greatest number is to say little. Bentham's mind was much too practical to rest in vague theorising. "In his 'Principles of Legislation' he goes on to consider how the greatest happiness of the greatest number can be best secured by legislation. From the point of view of the legislator happiness consists in four things—subsistence, abundance, equality, and security, which includes liberty. What of property, which is, after all, the crucial question in a democratic *régime*? If the sovereign power is the majority, then it is natural that the majority should favour a wide diffusion of wealth, and the obvious way to effect this is by legislation intended to prevent the

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accumulation of large fortunes, or to curtail them when created. Democracy, resting upon the theory that the majority have the right and the power to promote their own greatest happiness, naturally tends to Socialism, with its nationalisation of property.

Bentham did not favour Socialism. In his view, security of possession is the real starting-point and inspiring motive of progress,—not equality of wealth, which does not supply the necessary motive to accumulation. In the words of Bentham: “When security and equality are in conflict, it will not do to hesitate a moment. Equality must yield. The first is the foundation of life; subsistence, abundance, happiness, everything depends upon it. Equality produces only a certain portion of good. Besides, whatever we may do, it will never be perfect: it may exist a day, but the revolutions of the morrow will overturn it. The establishment of a perfect equality is a chimera; all we can do is to diminish inequality. . . . But if property should be overturned with the direct intention of establishing an equality of possessions, the evil would be irreparable. No more se-

curity, no more industry, no more abundance! Society would return to the savage state whence it emerged." But suppose the majority believe that for the greatest happiness of the greatest number equality secured by a redistribution of wealth is necessary, they will not be acting in antagonism to Bentham's principle of utility. Bentham's preference for security, his defence of property, cannot be justified on the ground of mere utility. When property is rooted in the idea that every man has a right to the products of his own labour, then you have a satisfactory basis for a form of government which, while aiming at happiness, does not run counter to the natural rights of man. Bentham's theory of utilitarianism, when translated into the political arena, ends in the despotism of Hobbes, the only difference being that in the one case it is the despotism of the many, in the other the despotism of the one. In his book, 'Herbert Spencer, the Man and His Work,' the present writer discusses this point as follows: "Bentham, like Hobbes, had a low view of human nature. The only difference between them was that the one saw no hor-

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of social organisation except through a despotic monarchy, whereas the other pinned his faith to a utilitarian democracy. The end which Hobbes sought to gain by absolutism, Bentham, and for that matter Rousseau, sought to gain by a popularly-elected Government whose aim was the greatest happiness of the greatest number. For the rights of man, which had fallen into discredit by the excesses of the French Revolution, Bentham substituted the happiness of man. . . ."

The practical bearing of these two views of society is far-reaching. If the function of government is directly to produce social happiness, there is no escape from paternal legislation, which in practice leads to the rule of a despotic majority. If, on the other hand, the function of government is to maintain the liberty of the individual, so far as he does not encroach upon the like liberty of his fellows, then not only is despotism impossible, but the way is open for the development of all kinds of energies and talents,—in short, for the growth of those individual variations which, in the social as in the natural world, are the real elements of enduring progress. Ben-

tham's utilitarian theory, when applied to government, fails to satisfy. Intended by Bentham to foster liberty and Individualism, it can really be worked in the direction of despotism and Socialism. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that from a practical point of view it had the merit of giving a great impetus to the reform movement. In the great task of rectifying practical abuses Bentham was a master worker. He brought people face to face with the gross anomalies and absurdities of the British Constitution; and while he failed to formulate a satisfactory system of political philosophy, as the founder of a new school of politics he holds an honoured place in history.

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### CHAPTER VI.

#### THE PHILOSOPHIC RADICALS.

It was well for the pacific development of political thought in this country that Jeremy Bentham was not a great speculative systematic thinker. Had his mind been cast in the mould of the Revolution thinkers, or had he been possessed of a fanatical passion for bringing in the social Millennium while you wait, he would have increased to an enormous extent the reaction in the public mind against the French Revolution. Happily for the school of thought which he started, Bentham, though in intellectual temperament a genuine eighteenth-century representative, had no sympathy with the watchwords of the Revolution. As was pointed out in a previous chapter, he discarded the Rights of Man for Utility; or, in other words, the greatest hap-

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piness of the greatest number. Bentham's Utility principles exactly suited the practical tastes of his countrymen; it reconciled to the idea of reform moderate thinkers who would bitterly have resented the revival of the discredited Revolution doctrines. However, it should not be overlooked that underlying differences over their political catchwords was complete unity of opinion between the Benthamites and the Revolution thinkers in regard to what may be termed the sociological aspect of the political problem. The fundamental beliefs which both schools held in common, and which inspired their political activity, were the modifiability of human nature and the perfectibility of society. The difference between the two schools was that the Revolution thinkers held that humanity could never be modified in the right direction except through education and sound political arrangements, and that the two great obstacles to the realisation of their ideal were an obstructive Church and a despotic Monarchy. There was nothing for it, in their view, but to sweep clean away the entire social and political structure and start afresh.



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refuge from the revolutionary storm, were now being used as prisons for the free spirit of man. In his 'Autobiography' J. S. Mill describes the political conditions which faced the Philosophic Radicals when they began to arrest public attention: "It was a time, as is known, of rapidly rising Liberalism. When the fears and animosities accompanying the war with France had been brought to an end, and people had once more a place in their thoughts for home politics, the tide began to set towards reform. The renewed oppression of the Continent by the old reigning families, the countenance apparently given by the English Government to the conspiracy against liberty, called the Holy Alliance, and the enormous weight of the national debt and taxation, occasioned by so long and so costly a war, rendered the Government and Parliament very unpopular. Radicalism, under the leadership of the Burdetts and Cobbetts, had assumed a character and importance which seriously alarmed the Administration; and their alarm had scarcely been temporarily assuaged by the celebrated Six Acts, when the trial of Queen Caroline roused a

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wider and still deeper feeling of hatred. Though the outward signs of this hatred passed away with its exciting cause, there arose on all sides a spirit which had never shown itself before—of opposition to abuses in detail. . . . At this period, when Liberalism seemed to be becoming the tone of the time, when improvement of institutions was preached from the highest places, and a complete change of the constitution of Parliament was loudly demanded in the lowest, it is not strange that attention should have been roused by the regular appearance in controversy of what seemed a new school of writers, claiming to be the legislators and theorists of this new tendency."

Under these circumstances it is easy to understand the great interest which was created by James Mill's article on "Government," in which was manifested an attempt at one and the same time to satisfy the claims of political philosophy and to give an impetus to the cause of political reform. In regard to the latter, the late Dr Bain has left on record the opinion that James Mill's article was actually a guiding and impelling force

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in the movement which culminated in the first Reform Bill. An article of such importance in the political development of the past century demands careful consideration. All the members of the Bentham cult agreed that the object of government should be the greatest happiness to the greatest number. The practical question came to be, How can the political Constitution be so framed as to secure this end? Bentham's answer to this question, as we saw, was far from satisfactory. Let us see how far James Mill comes to a solution of the problem. Mill goes about his task with greater thoroughness than Bentham. Not content with the vague declaration that the object of government is the greatest happiness of the greatest number, Mill proceeds to analyse happiness with a view to discovering, from a political point of view, in what it consists. He begins with labour, which is necessary for procuring the means of happiness. If Nature produced all that was necessary to satisfy the desires of all, there would be no conflict of interests, and, consequently, no need for government. But human capacities for labour are varied

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and unequal, and, as a consequence, the returns to individual labour are unequal. Out of this point rises the fundamental question, What is each man's proper share? That which he himself produces? What bearing has this on the greatest happiness of the greatest number? Mill's answer is that the greatest happiness is produced by "assuring to every man the greatest possible quantity of the produce of his own labour." How is this to be done? By means of government, whose function is to secure to those who labour the products of their labour. Government, then, resolves itself into an association of men for the purpose of protecting one another in the possession of their property. What is the best form of government for securing this end? For obvious reasons, the best form cannot be a Monarchy or an Aristocracy, because in these you have the many governed by the few, who will use their power for their own sinister interests. Mill is driven to the conclusion that for securing the happiness of the many you must have government by the many—namely, Democracy.

A democratic government resting on the

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representative system is James Mill's ideal form of government, the one justified by the Utilitarian theory. In a democracy, he held, ~~there~~ there would be not conflict, but identity, of interests. But suppose the people do not know their true interests, — suppose they imagine their interests to lie in making an attack upon the property of the minority. What guarantee is there that under universal suffrage the people who associate happiness with wealth will not legislate with a view to getting a larger share of the material wealth at the expense of the rich? In his famous 'Edinburgh Review' article, in reply to James Mill, Macaulay fixed upon this fatal flaw in the Utilitarian system of government. What guarantee, said Macaulay, have we that the people will not, like the Monarchy and the Aristocracy, be swayed by sinister interests, and in the interests of the poor plunder the rich? Universal suffrage, Macaulay believed, was incompatible with property, and, consequently, incompatible with civilisation. Mill's reply to this criticism is most interesting. He points to the middle classes as the real leaders of the

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people. However widely the franchise is extended, says Mill, the moral authority will rest with the middle classes. Why, then, retorts Macaulay, this roundabout system of government? If the middle classes are the natural leaders of the people, why not restrict the franchise to them? In the words of Macaulay: "The system of universal suffrage, according to Mr Mill's account, is only a device for doing circuitously what a representative system with a pretty high qualification would do directly." To this Mill would reply that universal suffrage has another besides a purely political value,—it has an educative value of a high order; and this brings us round to another part of the Utilitarian philosophy which must not be overlooked.

James Mill shared with the French school the belief in the perfectibility of society through institutions and education. A believer in the theory of the Association of Ideas, Mill held fast by the importance of so constructing the individual environment by means of a proper system of education, and the social environment by means of

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rational political institutions, that as the outcome of experience true ideas would become part of the heritage of humanity, and the happiness of all would be sought after as an ultimate end. Holding such views, it is easy to understand how James Mill came to believe that universal suffrage, combined with a universal system of education, would have such a potent influence on the people that democracy would find its natural leaders in the educated and the intelligent. Abounding hopefulness was the keynote of the Philosophic Radicals. With them Utilitarianism, as expounded by Bentham, was something more than a system of politics: it was a theory of life, and to some of its advocates, notably J. S. Mill, it had all the sacredness of a religion. Thus we find Mill writing of his first acquaintance with Bentham's famous work on Legislation: "When I laid down the last volume of the 'Traite' I had become a different being. The 'principle of utility,' understood as Bentham understood it, and applied in the manner in which he applied it, fell exactly into its place as the keystone which held together the detached and

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fragmentary component parts of my knowledge and belief. It gave unity to my conception of things. I now had opinions, a creed, a doctrine, a philosophy in one, in the best sense of the word, a religion, the inculcation and diffusion of which could be made the principal outward purpose of life."



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### CHAPTER VII

#### JOHN STUART MILL

So far an attempt has been made to present a clear idea of the Utilitarian system of thought in its political aspect as held by Jeremy Bentham and expounded by James Mill. We now come to John Stuart Mill, who was looked upon as the philosophic heir of the great prophet of Utilitarianism. From his earliest years young Mill was dedicated by his father to philosophic thought. In 1817, when the boy was six years old, James Mill, in reply to an offer of Bentham to be his guardian, said: "Should I die the thought that would pinch me most severely would be leaving the poor boy's mind unmade." James Mill goes on to say that he "accepts the offer of Bentham, so as to leave John a successor

of both of us." For a time young Mill wore with filial deference and enthusiasm the Utilitarian mantle. He found in Bentham's doctrine a religion, a system of thought, and a philosophy of politics. Certainly James Mill did his best to imprison his son's mind within the bounds of his own somewhat narrow creed. Happily young Mill's mind was too vigorous in its texture and too independent in its action to be made the mere channel of Utilitarian ideas. The critical habit which had been fostered by his education soon began to be applied by Mill to the creed in which he had been nurtured. With every desire to spare the paternal feelings, he could not hide from his father the fact that on several important points he was departing from the true Bentham position. During his father's lifetime Mill accentuated as little as possible his increasing dissatisfaction with the Benthamite system of thought, but a few years after his father's death he wrote two remarkable articles—one on Bentham and the other on Coleridge—which must be studied as important landmarks on his intellectual journey. Jeremy Bentham and James Mill in

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modes of thought were essentially eighteenth-century products. Disagreeing with the French school in regard to the natural rights of man, they were in essential agreement in regard to two main points—the perfectibility of man through education and improved institutions, and a bitter hatred of kings, aristocrats, and priests as the corrupters of humanity. What was history but one long dismal record of the ignoble part played by these three classes in the life of the race? Bentham and James Mill, like the Revolution thinkers, poured scorn upon Burke's eulogy of the wisdom of our ancestors. All that history can do for us, said Bentham, is to teach us the errors of our ancestors. Society was to be re-created on the lines of pure reason.

In his essay on Bentham John Stuart Mill made it plain that, in his opinion, this concept of history seriously vitiated the Utilitarian system of philosophy, more particularly the political side. "Bentham's contempt for all other schools of thinkers," says Mill, "his determination to create a philosophy out of the materials furnished by his

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own mind and by minds like his own, was the first disqualification as a philosopher." This, and expressions of a like nature, gave great offence to disciples like Grote, who were fanatically attached to Benthamism, which they regarded as the pure milk of the political word. But it is in his essay on Coleridge that Mill, with rare courage and lucidity, deals with the grave flaws in the Revolutionary and Utilitarian conceptions of politics and society. He says: "To tear away was indeed all that those philosophers for the most part aimed at; they had no conception that anything else was needful. At their millennium, superstition, priestcraft, error, and prejudice of every kind were to be annihilated. Some of them gradually added that despotism and hereditary privileges must share the same fate; and, this accomplished, they never for a moment suspected that all the virtues and graces of humanity could fail to flourish, or that when the noxious weeds were once rooted out the soil would stand in need of any tillage." To what was this error primarily due? To a belief in what may be called absolutism in

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politics. To them governments were divisible into two classes—good and bad. Good government meant government by the people; bad government meant government by the few for their sinister interests, and for that purpose using for the slavery and debasement of the people the two great superstitions, religion and loyalty. Mill came totally to disagree with this view. He commends the school of thinkers represented by Coleridge for seizing hold of the important truth of the relativity of political institutions. Mill recognised that in the early stages of society—indeed to a very late period—reason plays a very small part in human affairs. The great problem is not how to construct society on rational principles, but how to secure social cohesion; how, in other words, in the midst of conflicts within and without the tribe, to secure something like a settled order of things, something permanent. The two great forces which work in this direction are religion and loyalty. Those two forces, Mill points out, had a disciplinary effect on early societies, and whenever they were relaxed anarchy set in and the society became “either

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the slave of a despotism or the prey of a foreign invader." To neglect of this great truth of the relativity of institutions Mill traces the serious blemishes of the French philosophers, and the equally serious errors in Bentham's political philosophy.

Mill was equally dissatisfied with the Utilitarian theory of government as held by Bentham and his father. Bentham, as we saw, looked for the salvation of society in Democracy, which means government by the majority. "But," says Mill, "is this fundamental doctrine of Bentham's political philosophy a universal truth?" Mill's criticism is as follows: "All countries which have long continued progressive or been durably great have been so because there has been an organised opposition to the ruling power. . . . A centre of resistance round which all the moral and social elements which the ruling power views with disfavour may cluster themselves, and behind whose bulwarks they may find shelter from the attempts of that power to hunt them out of existence, is as necessary where the majority is sovereign as where the ruling power is a hierarchy or an aristocracy.'

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There is a great falling away here from the unqualified and unquestioning belief in Democracy of Bentham and James Mill. The latter, it will be remembered, believed that under an extended franchise the people would look to the middle class as their natural leaders, and Bentham thought the danger to property would be slight, as the working class would be wise enough to see that their real interest lay, not in legislative schemes in the direction of equality of possessions, but in recognising the importance of capital and consequently inequality. Bentham expected the working classes to prefer security of possessions, which meant Individualism, to equality of possessions, which meant Socialism. With the passing of the Reform Bill the Philosophic Radicals met with a disillusionising experience. The middle class showed no desire to assume the leadership of the working class, who, on the other hand, showed no signs of accepting Bentham's teaching in regard to the necessity of inequality of wealth as a means of general prosperity. No sooner had the middle class been enfranchised than they were included in the privileged class,

and were attacked by the unenfranchised as fiercely as had been the aristocracy. The middle class, instead of proclaiming themselves leaders of their less fortunate fellow-citizens, showed dislike of extreme Radicalism, and allied themselves with the Whigs, who did not favour universal suffrage.

The extreme Radicals denounced the Reform Act as "a delusion, giving us as many tyrants as there are shopkeepers." They described the middle class as "the real tyrants of society," to whom the Whigs had intrusted "our liberties and industry." The word "industry" is significant as introducing into politics an element which was to give great perplexity to Mill and the Philosophic Radicals. Their ideal State was one in which, under a Democracy, governmental interference would be reduced to a minimum, in which property would be respected and free play given to the growth of capital, upon the increase of which the wages of labour and the general prosperity of the nation depended. Mill began to notice from certain utterances of working-class leaders that they would not rest content with the realisation



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of the Philosophic Radical ideal—that of limiting the sphere of government: what they aimed at was the application of government in the interests of labour. Out of disappointment with the Reform Act of 1832 sprang the Chartist movement and socialistic aspirations, which could get no countenance from Philosophic Radicalism. To Bentham and James Mill the problem of government seemed comparatively simple. All that was necessary was to get rid of monarchic and aristocratic rule, and place power in the hands of the people, who, under the leadership of the middle class, would see that every one was protected in his liberty and in the products of his labours. The problem increased greatly in complexity when it became clear that the people, who had not yet got the vote, took a different view of government, which, in their opinion, existed for the purpose, not simply of protecting the individual in the products of his labour, but also of seeing that the labourer received an adequate share of the wealth, privileges, and comforts of the community. As the issues became clearer the Philosophic Radicals

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began to lose faith in the progressive movement. Some of them went over to the Whigs, while a number became Tories. In Parliament, after the Reform Bill, their influence was slight, and their numbers became so diminished that Macaulay, in his facetious way, declared that the party consisted of "Grote and his wife." In consequence of his somewhat heretical attitude towards Bentham, the founder of the school, Mill was looked at by the orthodox section with suspicion. However, he did not abandon the school. Bentham's political philosophy he found inadequate to the solution of the problems of the new time. He set himself to supply an amended philosophy of Radicalism, which, while retaining all that was essential in Bentham's, would deal more effectively with the grave questions which now confronted progressive thinkers.

On one point Mill still remained true to the views of the progressive school. The Utilitarians held fast by the eighteenth-century belief in the perfectibility of society. In the following utterance John Stuart Mill strikes the genuine note of eighteenth-century op-

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timism: No one whose opinion deserves a moment's consideration can doubt that most of the great positive evils of the world are in themselves removable, and will, if human affairs continue to improve, be in the end reduced within narrow limits. Poverty, in any sense implying suffering, may be completely extinguished by the wisdom of society, combined with the good sense and providence of individuals. Even that most intractable of enemies, disease, may be indefinitely reduced in dimensions by good physical and moral education, and proper control of noxious influences; while the progress of science holds out a promise for the future of still more direct conquests over this detestable foe. And every advance in that direction relieves us from some, not only of the chances which cut short our own lives, but, what concerns us still more, which deprive us of those in whom our happiness is wrapt up. As for vicissitudes of fortune, and other disappointments connected with worldly circumstances, these are principally the effect, either of gross imprudence, of ill-regulated desires, or of bad or imperfect

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social institutions. All the grand sources, in short, of human suffering are in a great degree, many of them almost entirely, conquerable by human care and effort; and though their removal is grievously slow,—though a long succession of generations will perish in the breach before the conquest is completed, and this world becomes all that, if will and knowledge were not wanting, it might easily be made,—yet every mind sufficiently intelligent and generous to bear a part, however small and inconspicuous, in the endeavour, will draw a noble enjoyment from the contest itself, which he would not for any bribe in the form of selfish indulgence consent to be without.” That, surely, is a noble ideal.

The important question is—What share have political institutions in the great perfecting process, and what form shall those institutions take? We know the answer given by Revolution and Utilitarian schools. Substitute democratic for monarchic and aristocratic government and educate the people, and, argued the eighteenth-century school, you are on the fair way to a regenerated

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social State. When John Stuart Mill came to the front the question of government was growing exceedingly complex. It was no longer as it was with the French thinkers, a question of getting rid of political and ecclesiastical despotism and corrupt government generally. Those things might be got out of the way, but another and more difficult problem was raising its head. Along with a political revolution in France there was an industrial revolution in Britain. In the olden days there was great inequality of wealth. Kings, aristocrats, and churchmen were hated by the common people mainly because they were supposed to have used the powers of government for their own material aggrandisement. But it was becoming clear, as the effect of the industrial revolution, that a new source of inequality was springing up which had little to do with political injustice — namely, economic inequality. Great fortunes were being made by captains of industry, while the toiling millions in squalid factories were barely able to secure the necessities of life. At the time of the Reform agitation of 1832 the idea

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suggested itself to the working classes to use political power for the purpose of redressing the growing economic inequality. Socialism, in short, began to appeal to the wage-earner rather than the Individualism of the old progressive thinkers. The old watchword of personal liberty did not sound inspiring to those who thought that it only meant liberty to starve. Such a development of society put a severe strain upon Mill's optimism. What was to be done? Clearly the question of government in the old sense was secondary to the economic question. The point of urgency became not to be the distribution of political power but the distribution of wealth. Mill now began to grasp a truth to which his leaders had been blind—namely, that political is conditioned by economic evolution. The old idea of Paine and Bentham that democratic institutions were in themselves necessary and absolutely good for all times and places was seen to be utterly erroneous.

At any rate, Mill seems to have felt that of primary importance in discussing the question of the distribution of political power was the

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question of the distribution of wealth or economic power. In other words, he saw that politics must include sociology. Mill worked hard at the attempt to discover the law of social development. He was ready to look for light to all quarters. At one time he looked with favour upon Comte's famous law of the three stages; at another time he sympathised with the rising historical school, and at another he was deeply influenced by the views of De Tocqueville. Before dealing with the problem of government, Mill found it necessary to deal with the problem of wealth, and in 1848 appeared his 'Principles of Political Economy.' Mill was a disciple of Ricardo, in whose hands economic science reached conclusions which did not harmonise with the doctrine of the perfectibility of society. By analysis of economic laws and forces, Ricardo came to the conclusion that the wages of labour could not rise above subsistence point,—a conclusion which was made unpalatable by the dictum of Malthus that, owing to the law of population, there was no cover laid for the poor man at the national banquet. This, to Mill, was a depressing and distressing view.

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Natural laws, it would appear, not the injustice of man and the despotism of government, were the real cause of social misery. Was there no way out of the melancholy conclusion? Mill thought he found a way out in the attempt to discriminate in economic science between the laws of production and distribution. "The distribution of wealth," says Mill, "is a matter of human institution solely." Here was a distinct departure from the Individualism of Philosophic Radicalism.

Indeed, it was a distinct recognition of Socialism, with its belief that one of the functions of government is the equal distribution of wealth. In Mill we find two tendencies struggling for mastery. As a Benthamite he held fast by the belief in liberty as the salt of society. Out of this belief grew his little book 'On Liberty,' in which an eloquent plea is made for the greatest possible freedom to the individual as necessary not only to himself, but to the community—a plea which has been compared in point of force and earnestness with Milton's 'Areopagitica.' In treating of government, however, we find Mill not so eloquent about liberty. His problem here



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is how to find safeguards for the majority, whose liberty he dreads, in the interests of the community. If, as Mill held, wealth distribution is a matter of human institution, it is at once obvious that a government resting upon a majority composed of wage-earners will carry out the process of distribution in their own interests. In 1861 appeared Mill's book, 'Considerations on Representative Government.' There is not much optimism in the treatise. Mill's belief in the perfectibility of society seems to have waned considerably. Ricardo and Malthus had brought into prominence certain grim economic facts and laws which had nothing directly to do with political arrangements, with the result that the social millennium of the Revolution thinkers and the Utilitarians seemed to melt away in a dim and distant future. Ricardo and Malthus had no gospel of hope for the toiling millions. Profits, said Ricardo, come out of wages, consequently between Capital and Labour there is inherent antagonism. Capital, with great power behind it, will always be able to win in the conflict with Labour, whose rate of remunera-

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tion, moreover, is still further lowered by the population law of Malthus.

The best economic science of to-day has seen through the fallacies of Ricardo, and much has happened to reduce the population law of Malthus to modest dimensions; but when Mill wrote, the great problem which faced him in his attempt to find a scientific system of government was how to mediate between Capital and Labour in the political sphere. In the economic sphere, pure and simple, Labour was helpless but give the labourer a vote, and at once, in common with his fellows, he becomes politically omnipotent. What will the working class do with their power? Bentham thought that the working class would see that their real interests lay in respect for property and capital. James Mill believed that, led by the middle class, the working class would consider their real, not their fancied, interests. John Stuart Mill was not so sanguine. He had seen the rise of Socialism, he realised the cheerless outlook afforded by political economy, and he had come to the conclusion that when the working class got the power they might throw an

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unfair share, or even the whole, of the burden of taxation on the larger incomes and on realised property, and "add to the amount without scruple, expending the proceeds in modes suggested to conduce to the profit and advantage of the labouring class." Mill further thought it probable that legislative attempts would be made to raise wages. Indeed, nothing is more remarkable than the prophetic insight he showed into the political tendencies of his day. He was under no illusion on the subject of democracy. In fact, differing from his early teachers, Mill held that if a perfect society was to be reached it could only be by establishing safeguards against an all-powerful democracy. Mill had a perfect dread of government by unchecked majorities. What were his safeguards? He mentions two — representation of minorities and education. He saw in the elaborate scheme of Hare a method by which minorities could have their political power so focussed as to form a formidable check to the majority. Mill's faith in political machinery prevented him from seeing that schemes are not always worked in the spirit in which they are origin-

ated. In fact, as the experience of America only too clearly shows, the most perfect democratic schemes in theory may in practice become instruments of demoralisation. When the party spirit is rampant and political passions roused power is apt to be engineered by wire-pullers, who make politics a profession, without regard to the public welfare or political honour. In the end the success of the political machine depends on national character, and at this point Mill pins his faith to democratic institutions because of their educative nature. As became a Utilitarian, Mill never lost faith in education, which, of course, means not merely academic training, but also the training of citizens under popular institutions. The kind of education which Mill advocates might work wonders were it not that it is necessarily a slow process, the beneficial effects of which may not be felt for a generation, whereas political power once granted is exercised with tremendous force immediately. It is well to educate our masters, as Robert Lowe once advised, but it is at the nation's peril if the people are not educated till they become our masters.

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Mill himself, as his 'Autobiography' states, began to lose faith in this part of his scheme. He says: "I had learnt from experience that many false opinions may be exchanged for true ones, without in the least altering the habits of mind of which false opinions are the result. . . . For although they [the English public] have thrown off certain errors, the general discipline of their minds, intellectually and morally, is not altered. I am now convinced that no great improvements in the lot of mankind are possible until a great change takes place in the fundamental constitution of their modes of thought. . . . Since there was little in the apparent condition of the public mind indicative of any tendency in this direction, my view of the immediate prospects of human improvement was not sanguine." Dissatisfied with the creed of his early teachers, Mill set himself to revise and amend Philosophic Radicalism. He certainly made considerable revisions and amendments, but he was unable to round off his political philosophy as a complete whole. It remained in the end a kind of intellectual

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patchwork. Mill himself was conscious of his failure. In his 'Autobiography' he says: "If I am asked what system of political philosophy I had substituted for that which I had abandoned, I answer, 'No system; only a conviction that the true system was something much more complete and many-sided than I had previously any idea of.'" Gradually his faith in democracy declined. A lover of liberty and individuality, he feared that the result of government by majority would be the establishment of an insidious despotism and a *régime* of mediocrity, under which the hardier and self-assertive virtues would receive no encouragement. Mill felt that new ideas and new methods of activity would find opposed to them a dead-weight of democratic conservatism. To the people he did not look for the elements of progress. He came to the conclusion that "the initiation of all wise and noble things comes, and must come, from individuals, generally at first from some one individual. The honour and glory of the average man is that he is capable of following that initiative: that he can re-

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spond internally to wise and noble things, and be led to them with his eyes open." And thus, rather unexpectedly, we find Mill giving something like approval to Carlyle's great-man idea.

## *Carlyle as a Political Thinker*

### CHAPTER VIII.

#### CARLYLE AS A POLITICAL THINKER.

As a political thinker Carlyle is exceedingly difficult to classify. At one time he rejoices the heart of the fiercest Radical by his attacks on institutions the most venerable; at another time he empties vials of vitriolic scorn on the heads of believers in democracy. He is the sworn foe of political schemes for bringing in the millennium, while he is equally denunciatory of the hide-bound conservatism which glorifies political stagnation. We get a clue to Carlyle as a political thinker when we regard him from a dual aspect — as the greatest modern dissector of social and political relations, and as the advocate of a specific theory for the regeneration of society. In writing of society, Carlyle rejects with scorn the Utilitarian theory of the Ben-



thamites. Society, in the view of Carlyle, is not a collection of individuals bent solely on the pursuit of happiness on the principle of every man for himself. In 'Sartor Resartus' we have the following: "Call ye that a society where there is no longer any Social Idea extant; not so much as the idea of a common home, but only of a common overcrowded lodging-house? Where each, isolated, regardless of his neighbour, turned against his neighbour, clutches what he can get, and cries 'Mine,' and calls it Peace, because in the cut-purse and cut-throat scramble no steel knives but only a far cunninger sort can be employed? Where Friendship, Communion, has become an incredible tradition; and your holiest Sacramental Supper is a Smoking Tavern Dinner with Cook for Evangelist? Where your Priest has no tongue but for plate-licking; and your High Guides and Governors cannot guide; but on all hands hear it passionately proclaimed: *Laissez-faire*; leave us alone of your guidance, such light is darker than darkness; eat your wages and sleep. Thus, too, must an observant eye discern every-

where the saddest spectacle ; the Poor perishing, like neglected foundered Draught-Cattle, of Hunger and Overwork ; the Rich, still more wretchedly of Idleness, Satiety, and Overgrowth. The Highest in Rank, at length, without honour from the Lowest ; scarcely, with a little mouth-honour, as from tavern-waiters who expect to put it in the bill. Once sacred Symbols fluttering as empty Pageants, whereof men grudge even the expense ; a world becoming dismantled : in one word, the Church fallen speechless from obesity and apoplexy ; the State shrunken into a Police-Office, straitened to get its Pay ! ”

Carlyle's contempt for the mechanical methods by which the Utilitarians hoped to improve society was great. With remarkable insight he reached what may be called the evolution conception of society long before any of his contemporaries. He anticipated what is now known as the evolution view of society as an organism. The idea, which he received from the Germans, that Nature is not a mechanical collection of atoms, but the materialistic expression of a spiritual

unity—that idea Carlyle extended to society. As he puts it in ‘Sartor Resartus’: “Yes, truly, if Nature is one, and a living indivisible whole, much more is Mankind.” What is the tie that binds, or should bind, generations and society together into a living organic unity? Self-interest, according to the Utilitarians and Radicals, was equal to the task. Society in the past, said they, was hampered in all directions by class laws. The despotism of the few who made laws in their own interest was in the eyes of progressive thinkers the great obstacle to progress. Liberty became the watchword of this school, which included Adam Smith in economics, and Bentham and James Mill in politics. In some respects Carlyle was more Radical than the Benthamites and Mills. He could find no comfort in a social state held together by liberty and self-interest. He emphasised a thought which the Radicals were inclined to ignore—the thought of duty. As Carlyle looked upon society, he found deeper evils and miseries than could be cured by liberty and self-interest. ‘The Industrial Revolution, which severely tried

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John Stuart Mill's faith in the Radical theory, drove Carlyle into fierce antagonism to the panaceas of the Utilitarians.

In dealing with Chartism, he thus describes the condition of things which rendered that political movement intelligible. "It was a time," says Carlyle, "when public and private principle (as the word was once understood) had gone out of sight, and self-interest was left to plot and struggle and scramble as it could and would. Difficulties had accumulated till they were no longer to be borne; a time when the Rich, as the utmost they could resolve on, had ceased to govern, and the Poor, in their fast-accumulating numbers and ever-widening complexities, had ceased to be able to do without governing. And now the plan of Competition and *Laissez-faire* was on every side approaching its consummation; and each, bound up in the circle of its own wants and perils, stood grimly distrustful of his neighbour, and the distracted Common Weal was a Common Woe, and to all men it became apparent that the end was drawing nigh." The Condition of England Question, as Carlyle called

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it, was too serious to be remedied by purely political machinery. The idea that social salvation lay along the lines of an extended franchise and the "cash nexus" was apparent to Carlyle. "Reform ministries," he declared, "are as barren as the east wind." No particular benefits could accrue from the universal privilege of sending "the twenty-thousandth part of a master of tongue fence to the National Palaver." Democracy, in the opinion of Carlyle, meant government not by the wisest but by collective mediocrity.

What, then, was his own remedy for the state of misery which he so graphically portrays? Carlyle's remedy for the evils of liberty was a return to despotism,—not the despotism of a class, but of an enlightened, great man, and the recognition of duty as a superior principle to self-interest as the controlling principle of social life. Apart from the preliminary problem—first catch your great man—it is clearly impossible in a complex society like ours to suppose that guidance can be supplied by one man, however gifted. Carlyle treated such difficult problems as the labour question from the

heart rather than from the head; and as indicative of this we have the remark of Mr Espinasse, in his interesting 'Recollections,' that when Carlyle was writing on the labour question not a single blue-book was visible on his table. The truth is, Carlyle was not quite consistent in his views on social matters. In his early essays he was constantly extolling the spontaneous side of life, and condemning all attempts to apply mechanical methods to social diseases; but when he came to the study of politics, he was all in favour of allowing the great man to cut and carve at social institutions by methods quite mechanical. He extolled Cromwell, forgetful of the fact that Cromwell failed through ignorance of the truth, which Carlyle himself emphasised, that society is an 'organism, not a piece of clay to be moulded according to the notions of heroic potters. So impressed is Carlyle with the idea of union in society, that if he cannot realise his ideal by duty he will do it by force. Anarchy is his one dread. Order, with Carlyle, is heaven's first law, and those best fitted to secure it are heaven-sent men

—heroic souls, endowed with clearer wisdom and more resolute wills than ordinary mortals.

Hero-worship is the keystone of Carlyle's political fabric. There is a core of truth at the heart of the Carlylian theory. Society cannot be held together by self-interest, liberty, and equality. Under the most democratic system there is no such thing as equality. The great man, too, has his use. He need not, and cannot under modern conditions, use his influence despotically, but he has great scope for his influence nevertheless. He can captivate the minds of collective humanity by the grandeur of his ideals, the originality of his principles, and the nobility of his life. Great men are the salt of Democracy. They raise the standard of public life, because their greatness lies in the regions of the ideal. On the other hand, if the great man's aims are low, if he worships at the shrine of vulgar popularity, he may debase the moral currency of a nation and give a set-back to progress. As a substitute for democratic methods the great-man theory cannot be thought of for a moment, but

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allied with the popular tendencies of the age it may be made fruitful of good. ~~Carlyle's~~ influence lay not in the dry sphere of political thought so much as in the domain of political idealism. To him is largely due the higher ethical conceptions and quickened sympathies which now exist in the spheres of social, political, and industrial relationships. As the present writer has said elsewhere: "Much there was in the writings of the economists to call for severe criticism, and if Carlyle had treated the subject with discrimination he would have been a power for good; but he chose to pour contempt upon political economy as a science, and upon modern industrial arrangements, with the result that many of the most intelligent students of sociology have been repelled from his writings. In this respect he contrasts very unfavourably with Mill, who, notwithstanding temptations to intellectual arrogance from his one-sided training, with quite a chivalrous regard for truth, was ever ready to accept light and leading from thinkers who differed from him in temperament and methods. There may be conflicting opinions



as to which of the two men was intellectually the greater, but there can be no doubt that Mill dwelt in an atmosphere of intellectual serenity and nobility far removed from the foggy turbulence in which Carlyle lived, moved, and had his being. Between the saintly apostle of Progress and the barbaric representative of Reaction there was a great gulf fixed."

## *Cobden and the Manchester School*

### CHAPTER IX.

#### COBDEN AND THE MANCHESTER SCHOOL.

IN dealing with the school of political thought known as Philosophic Radicalism, the paralysing effect which Ricardo's economic theory and the Malthusian law of population had on the mind of John Stuart Mill was pointed out. Between them, Ricardo and Malthus seemed to have knocked on the head the optimism of the Revolutionary School. There appeared to be no room for the millennial hopes of men like Condorcet and Godwin in a world which was under the iron laws of Ricardo and Malthus. Reluctantly Mill was drawn to the conclusion that the hard lot of mankind was due less to the injustice of political institutions than to the niggardliness of Nature. In addition to this was the unequal distribution of wealth when once it was

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created by the energy of man. For a remedy ~~for~~ this he looked to semi-socialistic schemes. Mill never quite lost faith in freedom, especially in the sphere of opinions, but he failed to see what benefit freedom in itself could do, so long as Nature was so niggardly in its response to human activity. If the workers, according to Ricardo and Malthus, could not hope to get more than a subsistence wage, what benefit could come to them from political action?

A number of the Philosophic Radicals did not quite share the views of Mill. They held by the old view that bad laws had a great deal to do with the misery of the people. Thus we find in 1836 Philosophic Radicals like Grote, Molesworth, Hume, and Roebuck forming an association for repealing the duties on corn. Unfortunately they could not get the ear of the people. Their methods were too academic; their style too frigid to lift the question of the Corn Laws out of the cold region of the study into the heated atmosphere of the market-place. In 1838 the Anti-Corn-Law League was founded in Manchester, and in 1841 Richard Cobden entered

the House of Commons as member for Stockport. By a natural process of development political power passed from the Philosophic Radicals to the Manchester School. How came the Manchester School under Cobden and Bright to get the ear of the people in a way which the old Radicals could never get? For one thing, the Philosophic Radicals aimed at something more far-reaching than political reform. They were satisfied with nothing less than a reconstruction of fundamental beliefs. Bentham and his followers, influenced by the spirit if not the methods of the French Revolution, looked upon the Church, the Monarchy, and the Aristocracy as the great obstacles to progress. Their attitude towards religion did not commend itself to a large circle, while their violent denunciations of loyalty alienated the large number of people who need something more than bare utility in their political creed. Along with this was the fact that in the persons of Ricardo, Malthus, and Mill, Philosophic Radicalism had failed to find a remedy for the prevailing misery of the people, to which Carlyle was giving eloquent

voice. At this stage the Manchester School appeared. Not troubling themselves with fundamental beliefs, religious or philosophic, and keeping in the background all speculative ideas about government such as occupied the mind of Mill, Cobden and his friends turned the energies of progressive politicians into an economic direction. With them the fundamental questions were not what is the relation of the Church to a progressive civilisation? what should be the relation of the people to the Crown and the Aristocracy? how should political power be distributed? The one question upon which the Manchester School concentrated their attention was how to cheapen food and raise the wages of the people. The Manchester School was nothing if not practical.

Its members paid no attention to Ricardo and Malthus. Looking round on the existing situation, they found certain laws in existence whose baneful operation sufficed to explain — apart altogether from the niggardliness of Nature — the widespread discontent and misery. The Manchester School saw what the Chartists failed to see, that the need of

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the hour was an economic rather than a political agitation. Protection, in their view, was throwing its blight over the trade and commerce of the country, and bringing in its train dear food and low wages. As Mr Sydney Buxton, in his 'Finance and Politics,' puts it: "The agricultural interest had, in addition to the practically prohibitive tax on corn, been also protected against the invasion of any other foreign products. Hence the import of all animals, alive or dead, fresh or salted, of their bristles, their hides, and their hair; of all vegetables, fruits, and seeds—barley as well as wheat—had been either prohibited or subjected to enormous duties." As a member of the House of Lords told that Assembly in 1841, while hundreds and thousands of their fellow-countrymen were starving around them, "every animal that walked the earth, nay, every fish that swam and every bird that was fit for food, must be taxed, lest it should come in cheap for our starving population." In his 'History of England,' the late Spencer Walpole has the following: "It was shown that the differential duties on foreign and colonial timber virtually

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imposed a tax of £2,000,000 a-year on the people; that the same system raised the price of sugar by 20s. a hundredweight, or on an average consumption of 4,000,000 cwt. imposed a tax of £4,000,000 on the nation. It was estimated that the average duty on wheat amounted to 10s. a quarter, and that as the people consumed 24,000,000 quarters a-year the bread-tax was equivalent to an annual tax of £12,000,000. Protection, therefore, in the case of these three articles, was imposing a charge of £18,000,000 on the overtaxed people of this country." Under such a heavy burden trade languished, the profits of the manufacturer and the wages of the labourer fell. Men were turned out of employment just at a time when Protection increased the price of the necessities of life. Trade was disorganised, and in despair workmen resorted to strikes and anarchical methods generally. The sufferings of the people were intense. In Manchester, for instance, 12,000 families were supported by charity, 2000 families were without a bed, 5492 houses were shut up, and 116 mills and workshops idle; and it was calculated that there were 8666 persons whose

weekly income was not 14½d. each. In Stockport so many houses were untenanted that a wag chalked up on a shutter "Stockport to Let."

Cobden lost no time in deciding upon his plan of campaign. The Corn Laws must be abolished, not by the academic methods of the Philosophic Radicals, but by the formation of a great league supported by the middle class and the working class—the manufacturers and the workmen. Cobden, with a remarkable capacity which may be called political generalship, saw plainly that if the Anti-Corn-Law League was to be a success it would be necessary to attract to its banner all the prevailing discontent. In a remarkable letter, written in 1838, he says: "I think the scattered elements may yet be rallied round the question of the Corn Laws. It appears to me that a moral and even a religious spirit may be infused into that topic, and if agitated in the same manner as the question of slavery has been, it will be irresistible." At its origin the Manchester School had an immense advantage in being free from what injured the influence of the



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Philosophic Radicals — the irreligious spirit. Cobden, though not perhaps orthodox in the ordinary sense, was, if we mistake not, a member of the Church of England, and was fully alive to the great advantage of religious influences in his campaign. Bright was nothing if not religious. Like a prophet of old, he treated all political problems from the theocratic standpoint: he transformed the platform into a pulpit. With the political, economic, and religious forces on their side, can it be wondered at that Cobden — aided, of course, by the conversion of Peel — ultimately brought about the Repeal of the Corn Laws? The student who knows how Cobden was immersed in the practical work of the League may imagine that he had no other object in view than the freeing of the people's food from prohibitive tariffs. Cobden was no narrow-minded politician; he was essentially a thinker, who, in the intervals of a long life, had reached a comprehensive theory of civilisation.

Cobden saw in Free Trade a principle on the foundation of which a better and purer civilisation could be erected. He saw that

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Free Trade and Protection, or, as it was called in the days of Adam Smith, Mercantilism, carried with them totally antagonistic conceptions of civilisation. Protection means national independence, Free Trade national interdependence. What is Protection or Mercantilism but our old eighteenth-century friend, the balance of power, in a new guise? From the time that William of Orange, in his last address to Parliament, declared his desire to see England hold the balance of power, the people of this country have spent blood and treasure in a foreign policy which has proved as futile as it was sickening. The old Imperialism of William of Orange has given place to a new Imperialism. What is sought is no longer to hold the balance of power, but the balance of trade. This new Imperialism, like the old, spells international friction and demands an ever-increasing Army and Navy. In the eye of Cobden the superiority of Free Trade consists in the fact that it is the application of Christian ethics to the sphere of internationalism. As the present writer has said in his book on 'Adam Smith': "Under Free

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Trade the progress of one nation makes for the progress of all. Fleets and armies are no longer needed to secure a monopoly of trade to preserve the balance of power, because, in obedience to an economic law, those countries which are industrially equipped will share in the trade of other countries in the teeth of protective tariffs. Free Trade is not synonymous with a class of interests, but in essence means mutually advantageous exchange of services. Nations, instead of being hated rivals, each one armed to the teeth, lying in wait for the other, are seen to be members of a great federation, each developing its resources to the utmost, and exchanging its products in harmony and with mutual profit."

Out of their economic views developed naturally the foreign policy of the Manchester School. And here we come upon a clear distinction between the followers of Bentham and of Cobden. The Benthamites, on the whole, were opposed to intervention in foreign affairs, but their policy rested upon no distinctly formulated principle. Cobden and Bright made a special study of foreign

politics, making our policy to other countries essentially pacific as the logical outcome of their Free Trade views. It followed as a matter of course that when the economic battle was won, Cobden turned his attention to foreign policy. Cobden used his splendid powers on behalf of peace. But he began to see that among his own class were large numbers who, while eager enough to share in the national prosperity which followed upon Free Trade, had little interest in his national and international ideals. In vain did he plead for reduction of armies, for arbitration, and for all schemes inspired by the thought of the brotherhood of man. The English people he found to be essentially masterful and domineering. Like Bentham and James Mill, Cobden had built his hopes upon the middle class, and, like them, he had great faith in education. He was forced to admit that in those matters he had been over-sanguine, as witness one of his letters near the close of his career: "Manufacturers and merchants, as a rule, seem only to desire riches that they may be enabled to prostrate themselves at the feet of feudalism. How is

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this to end? And whither are we tending in both our domestic and foreign relations? Can we hope to avoid collision at home or war abroad whilst all the tendencies are to throw power and influence into the wrong scale?" And again: "Nations have not learned to bear prosperity, liberty, and peace. They will learn in a higher state of civilisation. We think we are models for posterity when we are little better than beacons to help them to avoid the rocks and quicksands."

What place does Cobden occupy in the great process of political development? The answer is not difficult. He never used the historic watchwords of the Revolution thinkers, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. What he did was to lift them out of the region of abstraction into the region of concrete realities. He saw trade and commerce hampered for want of liberty. He said nothing of the Rights of Man; he demanded in the name of social wellbeing the abolition of restriction on the free import of the people's food. He had no philosophic theory of equality, but he saw that under a system

of economic inequality no healthy social life was possible. He talked not grandiloquently of fraternity, but he showed that, resting on the basis of Free Trade, it was possible in ordinary daily life to foster the idea of the brotherhood of man. Much has happened since his day that would have caused Cobden pain. His ideals for a time went under; but one thing is certain, if ever a higher civilisation is to be reached the road lies along the path which Richard Cobden illuminated by a career as beneficent as it was inspiring.

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### CHAPTER X.

#### THE EVOLUTION SCHOOL.

THERE are two ways of looking at political development—the statical and the dynamical. Start with the statical and you reach two theories which, however, are inherently antagonistic. Begin with the theological conception of society as embodied in the idea of a fall of man from a state of innocence, and the corresponding political ideal is theocracy. Man's evil propensities can only be restrained by supernatural methods, and by a simple process of thought earthly kings become representatives of the heavenly King. Out of this naturally evolves the divine right theory which played such an important part in the history of our own country. The other and opposite theory is also the product of the statical way of looking at society. The anti-

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theological writers of the eighteenth century, equally with their opponents, believed that laws and institutions were the result of deliberate design, but they differed from them as to the designers. With the eighteenth century, headed by Rousseau, society had nothing supernatural in its origin. Laws and institutions were imposed upon men by designing monarchs and priests, who used loyalty and religion for the purpose of enslaving the people.

Out of this view grew naturally the Revolutionary School of politics. Man, said Rousseau, was born free and is everywhere in chains. In that case the duty of revolutionary politicians was to shake off the chains, and so give man back his original freedom. Here we have the key to the French Revolution, and also to the theories of the Utilitarian School of politics. John Stuart Mill, as we saw, became dissatisfied with this theory of political development. He began to see that laws and institutions were not wholly bad or wholly good; they are not to be treated by absolute standards, but by their relation to particular stages of social evolution. He was greatly



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helped to this view by the writings of Comte, whose entire political system of thought rests on the idea of the relativity of institutions. Mill saw that before there can be a science of politics there must be a science of society. This leads to the fundamental question, 'What are the causes of social progress?' Mill accepted the view of Comte that progress is the result of knowledge acquired, organised, and made subservient to social wellbeing. In this view the history of humanity is the history of knowledge. Here we see Mill still under the eighteenth-century view that Reason is the dominating force in human affairs. Mill never emancipated himself completely from the views of his early teachers. For this he is not to be blamed. When the theory of Evolution began to take hold of leading thinkers, Mill was too old to assimilate the new views, though he clearly saw that they were bound to revolutionise all phases of thought and activity, including social and political. The influence exerted by Evolution consists in its fundamental conception of society as an organism, and not, as with the Revolution School, a manufactured product,

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or with the later section of the school, as a collection of individuals whose progress was consciously determined by the extent of their knowledge.

In other words, society, according to the Evolutionists, originated not as with the Revolutionists in a social compact into which men had been juggled by monarchical and ecclesiastical despots, nor in any conscious desire for co-operation along the lines of increasing knowledge. Society, with the Evolutionists, originated in the unconscious impulses of human nature. The cause of social activity was man's desire to provide for his material wants and of those dependent upon him. The primitive root of society is economical, not intellectual. There was no social compact. Primitive men were not born free, as Rousseau said. They were born slaves to Nature, whose niggardliness drove them into co-operation, into tribes, in order to lessen the severity of the struggle for existence. With the formation of tribes the struggle for existence entered upon a new phase. Owing to primitive man's ignorance of Nature, his command over it was limited, and population limited to but

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mere subsistence. In early times the struggle for subsistence took the form of wars between tribes. With an increasing population and a stationary food-supply a policy of annexation, which meant war, was thrust upon primitive man by sheer necessity. Now the illuminating idea which Evolution brings into political thought is that political structures are the result not of deliberate design of scheming despots, but are determined by economic conditions. Given a state of society when the economic conditions are such as to make war a perpetual necessity, and it is absurd to talk of the liberty of the individual and the rights of man. Under Militarism the individual had duties, not rights; his interests were necessarily subordinated to the imperious interests of the tribe or State. This subordination was intensified by primitive religions, which, by deifying the chief or king, identified the laws of the tribe with the will of Heaven. Thus it is that monarchical and ecclesiastical despotism, which the Revolutionists attributed to designing enemies of the people, was a natural evolution from the circumstances which surrounded primitive society. What

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the Revolutionists called the Rights of Man could not possibly assume political importance till the rise of Industrialism, which demanded quite other social qualities than those of the Military era.

The moment that a serious and widespread attempt was made to provide for man's wants by labour instead of by war a new era dawned for society. Guizot, in a few words, has traced the process: "No sooner was society a little settled under the feudal system than the proprietors of the fiefs began to feel new wants, and to acquire a certain degree of taste for improvement and cultivation. This gave rise to some little comfort and industry in the towns in their domain; wealth and population increased within them—slowly for certain, but still they increased." By-and-by the workers in the towns began to feel their power. A struggle took place between the feudal lords and the burghers, who ultimately freed the towns from feudal rule. Peaceful industry then began to be the dominating factor in social progress instead of war. When society acknowledged the right of the individual to maintain him-

self by his own labour, instead of being compelled to spend his energies in war, the first stage was reached in a form of civilisation whose political watchword was freedom. Progress, then, was not due, as Mill and Comte said, to the advance of knowledge, or, as De Tocqueville believed, to the passion for equality, but to the necessity imposed upon man in an industrial system to secure and preserve his rights to the fruits of his labour. The burghers were not fighting for the Rights of Man in the abstract,—they were fighting for their individual rights to the fruits of their industry. Such a far-reaching change in human affairs as a shifting of the economic basis of society from war to industry could not take place without reacting upon the political structure. With the rise of Free Cities the doctrine of Might—which was quite in harmony with a military *régime*—gave place, gradually it is true, to the new doctrine of Right. The one in essence meant monarchical despotism; the other in essence meant democratic freedom. At root the demand of the city dweller meant that no longer should the individual be subordinated

to the State; that he had certain rights of which neither feudal lord, despotic king, nor government could deprive him.

As the present writer has said in his work on Herbert Spencer: "The key to the political evolution of society in this country from Magna Charta on to the last Reform Bill is found in the fact that the long period was a contest between the old despotic elements in the British Constitution, founded on might, and the growing industrialism, with its demand for the recognition of the fundamental rights of man—rights, moreover, which have a biological and psychological justification—the right to live, the right to think, the right to labour, and the right to the products of that labour. The various modifications in the British Constitution, from the Absolutism of the Stuarts to the Constitutionalism of the Hanoverians, the oligarchy of the House of Lords, and the democracy of the Reform period, represent successive stages in the great contest between the old despotism, under which the individual had no rights as against the State, and the modern view that the duty of the State is not to confer rights.

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but to safeguard the rights of man to which the State itself owes its existence and its rationality." In recent years a new theory of economic development, and with it a new political theory, has taken hold of the popular mind. We are now asked to discard the doctrine of liberty, which has produced the results indicated, and to substitute for it a doctrine of control under which the individual is once more subordinated to the State. Does this theory spell progress or retrogression? For the present we content ourselves with the criticism passed upon it in the name of the Evolution philosophy by a competent American writer: "The desire to return to community of property, to regulate human concerns by status and not by contract, to crush out capital and with it the possibility of any industrial integration, to abolish the incentives which make man sow to-day that he may reap in the future, to smother all Individualism under a social tyranny more absolute than the Hindu despotism of caste—this desire, it is obvious, is simply the abnormal desire to undo every one of the things in the doing of which we have seen that social evolution con-

sists. It is, in short, the theory of Rousseau unflinchingly carried into details, though, in deference to the watchwords of the present age, it is couched in expressions which imply a sympathy with human progress."

The Rousseau theory of politics, which in its modern garb is known as the new Liberalism, Collectivism, and Socialism, is synonymous with a denial of natural rights. If the duty of the State is not to safeguard rights, what then is its duty? It can only be to secure, in the words of Bentham, the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Thus it comes that the happiness of society is dependent upon governments. This view assumes that societies are the creation of governments. So far from that being the case, governments are simply intended to secure the necessary conditions for the proper development of society. Society exists before government. As Paine has remarked, government is nothing more than a national association acting upon the principles of society—a definition very different from that given by those who deny the rights of man, namely, that society is the creation of government, and needs to be regu-



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lated by paternal methods. The difference between a political theory which rests upon the idea of natural rights and one which denies natural rights is profound and far-reaching. The one view leads to political action in the direction of securing for the people equality of opportunity; the other points in the direction of equality of conditions. If the latter view is held, if equality of conditions is the goal of legislative effort, why should Lazarus sit at the rich man's gate when his place is at the rich man's table? Deny natural rights and you cannot stop short of the wildest socialistic schemes for equalising social conditions in the interests of the majority, whose will in a democracy is law. The subject is of momentous importance; indeed, the political future of society depends upon the answer to this question. Is there a natural standard of right or justice by which legislation may be tested, or is the will of the majority the final standard, the ultimate court of appeal?

# *The Theory of Natural Rights*

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE THEORY OF NATURAL RIGHTS.

Is there a natural standard of right or justice by which legislation may be tested? This is the fundamental question in politics. The Revolution School had a glimpse of the truth that there is a natural law in politics, but from their lack of historical knowledge, and their adoption of the Rousseau theory of a state of Nature, they erected the doctrine of the rights of man into a political dogma of the most destructive kind. As a reaction came the Utilitarian School, which based its political creed on happiness rather than on right, but equally with the Rousseau School it was defective on the historical side. Dissatisfied with the abstract method of the Utilitarians, another class of writers arose who based politics on history. This, known

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as the Historical School, is represented by the writings of the late Sir Henry Maine. According to Maine, the Revolutionists and the Utilitarians were led astray by applying the deductive method to politics. Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Bentham rested their political theories upon certain speculations about primitive man—speculations which had no historical basis. In opposition to the various schools of mere theorising, Maine declared for the necessity of the historical method. Let us, he said in effect, abandoning all hypothesis, endeavour to get to the origin of societies, discover the germs of political and other institutions, and, by tracing their evolution, we shall, by the light of history, reduce politics to something like a science. In this sphere Maine did great work.

The historical method has one defect, which is clearly pointed out by Professor Graham in his excellent work on 'English Political Philosophy.' "History explains what is by what has been, the present facts by the past series of antecedent stages or causes. But it does not explain sufficiently why property

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and contract are necessary, from principles of human nature, as well as from outward circumstances, and yet at all times there is a psychological explanation as well as the historical one, and the former the more fundamental. . . . The part played by the qualities of human nature, as well as by general historical causes, is not sufficiently brought out by the Historical School; and certainly, as Mill says, historical generalisations should be capable of being deduced from the general principles of human nature, as an additional guarantee of soundness." Notwithstanding the great merits of the Historical School in clearing up the past, and in tracing institutions through their various stages of development, we are still left with no definite pronouncement on the fundamental question of politics, Is there such things as natural rights? Eminent writers there are who disbelieve in natural rights. Rights, according to them, are matters of social arrangement and expediency. Thus the late Professor Jevons remarks in one of his books, that "the first step must be to rid our mind of

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the idea that there are any such things in social matters as abstract rights." Writing on the copyright question, the late Matthew Arnold says: "An author has no natural right to a property in his productions. But neither has he a natural right to anything whatever which he may purchase or acquire." In like manner we find Bentham, in his reaction against the vagaries associated with the Rights-of-Man creed of the Revolution, saying that government fulfils its office "by creating rights which it confers on individuals; rights of personal security; rights of protection for honour, rights of property, &c." Upon the denial of natural rights Austin based his whole system of political thought. In his view there are only legal rights resting upon utility

How is the question to be brought to a definite issue? Clearly we must apply a method of inquiry which will go deeper than the historical; we must study primitive man before he comes under the sway of organised political constitutions. Those who say that rights are the creation of governments forget that society exists before governments, and

the question arises, "How do societies exist under these conditions? Primitive societies are held together, not by laws which emanate from a central authority, but by custom. Customs are not imposed upon the people by their rulers. The evidence of the all-powerful force of custom is seen in the fact that in early days government has little to do with legislation, the rulers being mainly occupied in preserving ancient customs. What is the origin of customs? Customs develop spontaneously out of the instinctive qualities of human nature. One of the first instinctive movements in primitive societies is towards co-operation, which grows out of the instinct for self-preservation. What is meant by the saying that self-preservation is the first law of nature? It means that man asserts his right to live, and in order to that he co-operates with his fellows in order to make his claim effective. Surrounded on all sides by enemies and obstacles, primitive man finds existence so precarious that, urged on not by deliberate reasoning, nor by laws emanating from a central authority, but by the instinct of self-pres-

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ervation, he joins himself to his 'fellows. The right to self-preservation is not conferred upon him, as Bentham would say, by government; it is a right natural to man as man, and the first object of government is to protect him in that right against those who would rob him of it. The same thing holds good in regard to property. The right to property is, not a right conferred by government; like self-preservation, it arises out of the instinctive play of human nature. So strong is this right that out of it grew customs which no ruler dare overturn.

In the words of Herbert Spencer: "Among the customs which we find to be pre-governmental, and which subordinate governmental power when it is established, are those which recognise certain individual rights — rights to act in certain ways and possess certain things." Spencer goes on to instance certain tribes where no political organisation exists, in which private ownership is a recognised custom. The rights of property are fully established among uncivilised peoples, where there is no established government to confer such rights. As Spencer says: "The fact is

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that property was well recognised before law existed; the fiction is that property is the erection of law." When reduced to its ultimate analysis, the theory that governments confer rights ends in absurdity. The full extent of the absurdity is shown by Spencer as follows: "Each man exists in two capacities. In his private capacity he is subject to the government. In his public capacity he is one of the sovereign people who appoint the government. That is to say, in his private capacity he is one of those to whom rights are given, and in his public capacity he is one of those who, through the government they appoint, give the rights. Turn this abstract statement into a concrete statement and see what it means. Let the community consist of a million men who by the hypothesis are not only joint possessors of the inhabited region, but joint possessors of all liberties of action and appropriation; the only rights recognised being that of the aggregate to everything. What follows? Each person, while not owning any product of his own labour, has, as a unit in the sovereign body, a millionth part of the ownership



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of the products of all others' labours.

So each individual has a millionth portion of these rights in his public capacity, while he has no rights in his private capacity. These he gets only when all the rest of the million join to endow him with them, while he joins to endow with them every other member of the million."

Well may Spencer conclude that Bentham's proposition leaves us in a plexis of absurdities. Ignore the natural rights of man and you inevitably land in despotism. If it is the function of governments to legislate for the greatest happiness of the greatest number, you may bring about a state of affairs in which the minority receive unhappiness. Under this system a minority has no redress, as the State has fulfilled its duty when it secures the happiness of the majority. On the other hand, if the function of the State is to safeguard the rights of man—the right to life, to the products of labour, &c.—then the requisite conditions of liberty are secured to all. Or, as it might be put, happiness, which the deniers of natural rights make the end of legislation, is the natural result of the

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rational development of man's instincts, desires, and faculties. This development can only take place under favourable conditions—where liberty to develop is secured. Thus we reach the conclusion that, so far from society being the creation of government, and men's rights a matter of social and political expediency, government is simply a device for procuring the necessary conditions in which men exercise their rights without infringing upon the rights of their fellows.

To Herbert Spencer belongs the credit of placing the theory of the natural right of man on a firm scientific foundation. As the present writer has elsewhere remarked: "Agreeing with Hobbes and Bentham that government is a necessity, Spencer differs from them as to the origin of that necessity. Where Hobbes, Bentham, and Rousseau make happiness the motive of legislation, he makes it the result. According to Spencer, legislation has to do, not with happiness, but with justice. By tracing the social instincts of man to their biological and psychological roots, Spencer shows that the motive power

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of all progress, organic and superorganic, in animal and man, is the desire for freedom to develop. Grant this, and the first and indispensable condition of happiness is secured. The practical bearing of these two views is far-reaching. If the function of government is directly to produce happiness, there is no escape from paternal legislation which in practice leads in a democratic régime to the rule of a despotic majority. If, on the other hand, the function of government is to safeguard the liberty of the individual so far as he does not encroach upon the liberty of his fellows, then not only is despotism impossible, but the way is open for the development of all kinds of energies and talent—in short, for the growth of those individual variations which, in the social as in the natural world, are the real elements of all enduring progress.” It is customary just now to look upon Spencer as the representative of a now antiquated form of political thought. The truth is, in his political writings we find the reconciliation of two schools of thought which have hitherto been in an-

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tagonism — the Natural Rights School and the Historical School. Spencer rescued from the contempt and odium which its association with the French Revolution drew upon it the famous theory of the Rights of Man. He did this by showing on the basis of history, as interpreted by evolution, that the fundamental idea of natural rights — apart from the crude expression of it in the words of revolutionary thinkers — had an abiding scientific value. It is becoming increasingly evident that no satisfactory system, either of jurisprudence or politics, can be based on a system of philosophy which refuses to acknowledge the existence of a natural law of right. In this country Spencer stands almost alone, but on the Continent the value of his writings is recognised. The idea of "Naturrecht" is the root idea of German jurisprudence, and if we are to avoid political anarchy it will also need to be made the root idea of our political philosophy. It is not too much to say that the present confused state of political thought is largely due to the disfavour into which the doctrine of natural

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rights has fallen. Ignore natural rights, make the State supreme over the individual, and there is no halting-place short of Socialism, which is simply the Utilitarian theory carried to its logical conclusion in a democratic régime.

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### CHAPTER XII.

#### THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT.

IN dealing with the Philosophic Radicals we pointed out that they were essentially the leaders in a middle-class movement. True, they were in favour of an extension of the franchise wide enough to include the working class, the members of which, however, they expected would look to the middle class for guidance. Bentham and James Mill never doubted that under the guidance of the middle class the workers would in all economic matters recognise the value of capital, and pay great respect to property. Bentham discussed the question thoroughly. He saw a possibility that into economics the working class might introduce the democratic idea of equality, and he was at great pains to emphasise the superiority of security. Unless

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men, he said, were made to feel secure in the products of their labour there could not be an orderly civilisation ; to attempt to bring about equality was to put back the hands of the clock of progress. James Mill, Ricardo, and the other Philosophic Radicals were led to their high appreciation of the middle class by the fact that in the main they represented capital, which was the corner-stone of the accepted system of Political Economy. In the opinion of the Ricardians the one thing needed in the new industrial development, which began in earnest after the twenty years' war, was rapid increases in the nation's capital.

From a middle-class point of view, from the standpoint of manufacturers and the moneyed classes generally, the gospel according to Ricardo was highly satisfactory. What the Philosophic Radicals desired was to shift the balance of political power from the land-owning to the manufacturing class, whose great political object naturally was to get rid of legislative hindrances to trade and commerce. All this, of course, was in the interest of the working class, and therefore

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it seemed natural for James Mill to look upon the interests of the middle and lower class as identical. But, according to the economists, the growth of capital could be secured not merely by abolishing antiquated laws, but also by the free operation of other laws which were not artificial but natural. Ricardo said that from the nature of things wages could never rise above subsistence point, and Malthus indicated the reason of this in his famous law of population. Wages were thought at that time to come out of capital, and, therefore, industrial progress was largely dependent upon cheap labour. Clearly, then, the interests of the manufacturing and the working classes were not identical. The middle class was not, as James Mill thought, the custodian of the interests of the workers. It was also clear—and J. S. Mill was alive to the fact—that with an extended franchise the working classes would not say ditto to their social superiors, but would use their political power to improve their economic position. Socialism at intervals had made its voice heard in political controversy. In the Tory party even were men of influence who saw



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many good points in Socialism ; and men like Owen were so impressed with the new theory of social regeneration, that they were willing to risk wealth and reputation in experimenting with the subject. But all attacks on the capitalist system were doomed to fail so long as it was backed up by Political Economy, which in the time of Ricardo was believed to have reached the stage almost of an exact science. Naturally, friends of the working classes did not feel disposed to acquiesce in the Ricardian law of wages, which, along with the Malthusian law of population, doomed the labourer to a life of scanty subsistence in the interests of capital ; but at that particular time discontent, and even political agitation, seemed futile. A political agitation of working men against the law of gravitation seemed as sensible as agitation against the Ricardian law of wages.

By a stroke of irony, a great German economist, Karl Marx, accepting the doctrines of Ricardo, turned them against the capitalist system in favour of the working classes. In his definition of wealth Adam Smith made an unfortunate slip, which was taken over and

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popularised by Ricardo, to the effect that wealth is the creation of labour. Out of this sprang another error, that labour is the measure of the exchangeable value of commodities. The value of a thing, said Ricardo, is determined by the cost of its production. If wealth is the creation of labour, and if out of that wealth the capitalist has to secure his profit, clearly his share will be larger the smaller the amount allotted to the labourer. Once start with the view that profits can only increase as wages decrease, and there is no stopping short of the conclusion that the increasing prosperity of the capitalists is secured at the expense of the increasing degradation of the worker. By means of his iron law of wages, Ricardo seemed to show that this result was produced not by the greed of capitalists, but by the nature of things over which capitalists had no control. Marx came upon the scene with the pertinent question, If labour is the creation of wealth, how comes it that labour has to be contented with the crumbs that fall from the table of capital? At the end of a long, subtle argument, Marx reaches the conclusion that

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capitalist profit is simply the surplus value obtained from unpaid labour. Machinery, which was expected to be a boon to labour, has been used, according to Marx, to the further exploitation of labour, and as a result the capitalists are growing richer, while the labourers—the real creators of wealth—are growing poorer. What is the remedy? In the answer to this question Socialism steps out of the economic into the political arena. The remedy, according to Socialism, is the abolition of the capitalist system, and by means of the political power now in the hands of the workers to nationalise, by means of State machinery, the instruments of wealth and distribution.

See, now, the road we have travelled. Bentham and James Mill believed that, under the guidance of the middle classes, the workers would respect the capitalist system, which meant respect for property in preference to the watchword of the Revolution School—Equality—which would mean a return to barbarism. Now, if Adam Smith and Ricardo were right in saying that wealth was the creation of labour, Karl Marx cannot be

blamed for declaring that among the labourers the created wealth should be shared. Why should the workers respect property in the hands of those to whom it did not belong, while those who really created it had none of it themselves? Thus, on the foundation laid by Adam Smith and Ricardo, Marx erected a theory which united Socialism and Democracy. Bentham and James Mill never meant their famous Utilitarian theory, that the object of government should be the greatest happiness of the greatest number, to favour Socialism, and yet what is Socialism but the logical outcome of their theory? Socialism, in a word, can claim as its ancestors the Utilitarianism of Bentham and Ricardo's theory of value. If Ricardo is right, if labour is the creator of wealth, there is no escape from the conclusion that Socialists are acting quite logically in using the power of the State for the better production and distribution of wealth.

The only effective way to deal with Socialism is by attacking at the root the economic error upon which it rests—namely, that wealth

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is the creation of labour. Of course, this definition may be accepted if the phrase "labour" is so expanded as to include intellectual as well as manual labour; but when Socialists talk of wealth being the creation of labour, they mean by that the workers as distinguished from the capitalists, who are usually spoken of as interest and dividend receivers. The crucial question is this: Has the national wealth, say of the past hundred years, been the creation of labour as represented by the wage-earning classes? If it has, then the workers are quite justified in their political endeavour to secure their economic rights. If, however, the great increase is mainly due to the capitalist system, then it would be not merely unjust but suicidal to abolish that system in favour of State regulation of industry. What are the facts? No one will say that within the past hundred years there has been a great increase in the capacity of the British workmen. In fact, it might be said that, by the action of Trades Unionism, with its doctrine of limiting the output to the powers of the average worker, the capacity of the

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worker has been artificially weakened; and yet we are face to face with the fact that within that period the economic productivity per head of the population has trebled and more than trebled itself.

To what is this great increase in the national wealth due? Clearly not to labour as understood by Socialism. It is due to labour superintended by ability, which is of two kinds—inventive and organising. How much of the national wealth have the wage-earners created when compared with the great impetus given to industry by James Watt, Arkwright, Wheatson, Neilson, John Lambe, James Fox, and other men of inventive genius who, backed by capital, added enormously to the productive power of industry? Not to labour, in the sense defined by Socialists, but to ability of a rare but precious kind, do we owe the tremendous strides which have been made in wealth creation during the past hundred years. Inventions, moreover, resulted in greatly increasing the complexity of trade and commerce, making them international in their scope, and demanding another kind of ability

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—organising and directive. The talent needed resembled military genius, inasmuch as it organised into industrial armies what would otherwise have been a chaotic mass of labourers. As Bagehot well says: "A body of separate labourers has many of the characteristics of a mob; but one acting under the control of a capitalist has many of those of an army. A capitalist provides his labourers with subsistence, directs each what he shall do, and when, and educes the desired result of the whole combination at the proper time, much as a general does. He and his men will live and will produce riches where a mere multitude of labourers will starve. When, in very modern times, it has been endeavoured in schemes of 'co-operation' to enable labourers to subsist without dependence on an individual capitalist, it has been necessary, under cloak of the combination, to invent a capitalist in disguise. A common fund subscribed beforehand, an elected board to invest it, a selected manager to combine it, are all refined expedients for doing in a complex way what the single rich capitalist does in a single way." With-

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But the captains of industry the labourers in search of the promised land would find themselves hopelessly lost in the great economic wilderness.

Before dismissing this branch of the subject, it may be well to notice the severe condemnation which Socialists pass upon the capitalist as such. He is represented as a man who invests his money and then goes game-hunting, and takes, in the shape of dividends, the wealth which his workers have created. Socialists seem to look upon capital as a kind of manna which has been rained from heaven, and which is monopolised by a few men who happened to be at the particular spot when the golden shower fell. With capital itself they have no quarrel; they object to the capitalist. Socialists admit that two classes of men are needed in the production of wealth—the inventor and the worker. Does the capitalist perform a necessary function, or is he a drone who should be driven ignominiously from the industrial hive? Suppose you have an army of workers waiting for employment and the inventor ready to apply his invention to some new enterprise, it is clear that noth-



ing will be done till there comes forward a man with money who is prepared to stake his all in the projected undertaking. Apart from him the inventor is powerless. Take the case of Arkwright's invention of the spinning frame. The invention was in great danger of being lost, owing to the difficulty experienced by Arkwright in getting sufficient capital to put it into practical use. After severe rebuffs, he at last found two men of wealth who were prepared to finance him. Without the help of the two capitalists Arkwright's invention would have died in the germ. In that case intellectual ability and the industry of the worker would have been totally unable to increase the productivity of labour. In other words, without the aid of the capitalist the inventor would not have been able to put his wealth-creating ideas into practical operation, and the industry of the worker would find no outlet.

In reply to this it is contended that in the Socialist State there will be no difficulty in putting to the best use the intellectual labour of inventors. Instead of leaving inventions to the caprice of capitalists, the Socialist

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State will undertake the task of judging of the merits of inventions. Socialists think this will be an easy task. The fact is, nothing is more difficult than to judge of the merits of inventions. Again and again inventions have been placed before men of high scientific reputation and been rejected as utterly impracticable. In spite of that, capitalists, with an eye to gain, have taken up the disheartened inventor and risked their capital in the experiment. "Just think," says a French writer, "of Fulton offering his steamboat to Napoleon, and remember the disdain with which the Institute of France rejected his idea as contrary to the laws of science." Would a board of socialistic workers prove wiser than a board of scientists? The same French writer goes on to say: "I myself remember an illustrious savant who demonstrated to me the impossibility of establishing a trans-oceanic telegraph eight or ten days before the first despatch was transmitted from New York to Valencia. According to him, the currents of induction would prevent the transmission from taking place, and the capital which had been brought together for

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the construction and the laying down of the cable was so much capital wasted. Let us suppose this savant consulted by a Collectivist State on the expediency of constructing the first cable and throwing it across the ocean, and then say what counsel he would have given, and what would have been the action taken by the financial authority in regard to such an advice." Inventions are not rare things. The market is filled with them. The difficulty is to discriminate between practicable and impracticable schemes. How great is that difficulty is illustrated by James Watt's steam-engine patent. When Watt was perfecting his invention he was in partnership with Roebuck, who advanced the necessary funds. Roebuck afterwards found himself in financial difficulties, and was forced to sell part of his property, and also his interest in Watt's patent. The patent was valued by Roebuck's creditors at one farthing! In a Socialist State, where no individual enterprise is allowed, the patent which has revolutionised the world would never have seen the light. There would have been no appeal from the decision that

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the value of the patent was all but nil. Happily the patent got into the hands of the celebrated engineer Boulton, with results which we all know. Impelled by the hope of gain, the capitalist runs great risks where a State functionary would not risk even a little ridicule. With him the danger would be that rather than be at the great trouble of discriminating among a number of inventions, he would do his work in a perfunctory manner. The victim of official routine is not likely to be more discriminating than the capitalist, whose future may hang upon his decision about a particular invention. Besides, in a Socialist State, why should an inventor scorn delights and live laborious days? In a State in which labour is socialised, so that the inventor's reward will be just about as much as that of the ordinary worker, where is the incentive to strenuous intellectual labour? Again, if the result of an invention is to displace labour, is it reasonable to expect the Socialist Government to be enthusiastic over an invention which will breed discontent among the electors?

It is assumed that under a *régime* of demo-

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cratic Socialism, the State which would, of course, mean the majority of the people, the workers, new ideas in the region of invention would receive prompt encouragement. The history of industry shows only too plainly that the working classes are the stubborn enemies of all ideas which conflict with their own immediate interests. There is a tendency to associate democracy with progress, but there is a closer connection than most people suspect between democracy and Conservatism. Does any one suppose that if the working classes had been the supreme force in politics in the days of James Watt, Arkwright, and the great band of inventors, the introduction of machinery would have been allowed? Socialism, with its eye on the interests of labour, would have treated Watt and Arkwright as enemies of labour. How stupidly conservative labour may be in the day of its power is evidenced by the treatment which James Watt received at the hands of the Glasgow Hammermen. He was boycotted by them because he did not conform to their Trade Union rules, inasmuch as he had not served his apprenticeship to the trade of math-

ematical instrument making. Watt found refuge in the University building, where his inventive genius got peace to develop. Had Socialism been the governing power at the beginning of the industrial era, machinery, in the so-called interest of labour, would assuredly have been prohibited. Under a socialistic régime the inventor who announced the discovery of machines which temporarily displaced labour would be denounced as the enemy of the working man as fiercely as the capitalist is to-day. The man of wealth and the man of ideas would be treated as enemies of the great commonwealth of labour. The working classes would have made short work of the inventors at the beginning of the last century had it not been for the protecting arm of the much-abused capitalists. To the captains of industry Great Britain largely owes her present advanced position in the sphere of trade and commerce, and the working classes the great strides which they have made in economic prosperity.

The fact is, Socialists, by repeating the cry of Marx that under capitalism the rich are growing richer and the poor poorer,

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are on the wrong scent. The history of industry since the time that Marx wrote shows conclusively that he was in error. Thus we find a writer so favourably disposed to Socialism as Mr J. A. Hobson saying: "Taking as our criterion mainly wages and hours of labour, we are able to trace in every nation, and almost all recorded trades, a distinct advance in the position of wage-earners during the last twenty years." In his book, 'Problems of Poverty,' Mr Hobson has the following: "Until a few years ago it was customary not only for platform agitators, but for thoughtful writers on the subject, to assume that 'the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer.' This formula was ripening into a popular creed, when a number of statistical inquiries choked it. Professor Leone Levi, Mr Griffen, and a number of careful investigators, showed a vast improvement in the industrial condition of the working classes during the last half century. It was pointed out that money wages had risen considerably in all kinds of employment; that prices had generally fallen, so that the rise in real wages was even greater; that

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they worked shorter hours, consumed more and better food, lived longer lives, committed fewer crimes, and lastly, saved more money. The general accuracy of these statements is beyond question. The industrial condition of the working classes, as a whole, shows a great advance during the last half century. Although the evidence upon this point is by no means conclusive, it seems probable that the income of the wage-earning classes as an aggregate is growing even more rapidly than that of the capitalist classes.' The plea, therefore, that the increasing degradation of the wage-earning classes under capitalism demands the nationalisation of the instruments of production and distribution is not sustained by facts. The necessity for State Socialism has not been shown. But Socialism has other aspects. Short of State regulation of industry, a mild form of Socialism, known as Collectivism, in the form of State interference in many departments, is urged on the grounds of humanity, and to this aspect of the question the next chapter will be devoted.



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### CHAPTER XIII.

#### THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT—*continued.*

POLITICAL evolution is conditioned by economic evolution. By the aid of this law we come to something like a clear understanding of modern civilisation. Up till the break up of feudalism war was the dominating economic factor and accordingly such industry as existed was carried on by labourers working under compulsion. The ancient civilisation rested on slavery, which in the Middle Ages became modified into serfdom. Under a military *régime* the watchword is "Regimentalism." Individual liberty is unknown; even industry is conducted on the principle of regimentalism. An economic conception of life which rests on war necessarily involves the subordination of the individual to the State. Viewed thus, Socialism is simply the

principle of regimentalism carried over from the military to the industrial era. The worker, like the soldier, has just that amount of liberty which the State chooses to concede. We have pointed out that the all-powerful motive which inspired the long-protracted political battle for liberty was the desire of individuals to break away from the old military idea of regimentalism. The town dweller rebelled against the claim of the feudal lord to exercise lordship over him. The industrial section of the community denied the right of the feudal lords to regulate wealth production and distribution, and out of this denial grew up the contest between the military ideal with its compulsory regimentalism and the industrial ideal with its individual liberty. This conflict of economic ideals explains the rise and development of the two great political parties in the State — Whigs and Tories. Thus we find Bolingbroke defining Toryism as synonymous with divine hereditary right, passive obedience, non-resistance, and slavery. Whiggism, on the other hand, he treats as synonymous with the power of the people, liberty, resistance,

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and, if necessary, deposition. That is to say, Whiggism, recognising the new industrial era, held that the people had rights which the State dare not encroach upon; while Toryism held that the duty of the people was to submit unquestioningly to the decrees of the State.

In those days the State was a despotism worked by the few; in our days, under Socialism, it would be a despotism worked by the many. But the principle is the same—the subordination of the individual to the supposed interests of the rulers. Liberalism, carrying on the traditions of Whiggism, identified itself with freedom. Under Liberalism legislative reform up till modern times mainly consisted in repealing despotic measures which were conjoined to the military régime, and in harmony with the principle of regimentalism were fruitful in evil when carried forward into the industrial epoch. What was the French Revolution, with all its lurid horrors, but the result of a terribly dramatic collision between the two antagonistic ideals, feudal despotism and democratic liberty? In this country the conflict was

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more gradual. Liberty came to us with the minimum of anarchy by a series of legislative measures which gradually broadened the base of freedom. What Liberalism aimed at was equality of opportunity.

This was the ideal of Liberalism up till the promulgation of "The Radical Programme" by Mr Joseph Chamberlain in 1885. Liberalism before that showed tendencies in the direction of substituting State effort for individual initiative. But it was reserved for Mr Chamberlain to accentuate these tendencies, put them into definite shape, and with them to bait the political hook for purely electioneering purposes. Mr Chamberlain did not mince matters. Throwing over the old Liberal creed with its belief in equality of opportunity, he substituted the socialistic idea of equality of conditions. He emphatically declared it to be the duty of the State to increase the comfort of the masses, to multiply their luxuries, and to provide for all its members benefits which it is impossible for them to secure by their solitary and separate efforts. The intervention of the State was demanded in the

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interests "of Labour against Capital, of want and suffering against luxury and ease."

If," said Mr Chamberlain, "it be said that it is legislation of a Socialist tendency the impeachment may be admitted. . . . Socialism is not a stigma, but a modern tendency pressing for recognition."

The new Liberalism of Mr Chamberlain received a great impetus from an unexpected quarter. The Hegelian system of philosophy, especially on its political side, had taken root in Oxford, and through the writings of the late Professor Green and others began to influence a rising school of cultured Liberals. On the philosophic side the Hegelian system rests upon the idea that the individual is simply a temporary incarnation of the great World Spirit whose real manifestation is the State. At most, the individual represents the natural will, which needs to be brought into subjection by the social order and the State. Hegel emphasised a truth which Individualism was apt to forget, that only in society and under State organisations can the individual develop harmoniously, and that the State and individuals are not natural enemies, but parts of

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an organic whole; but his fondness for Greek ideals led him to underestimate the natural rights of the individual as against the claims of the State, which, in his view, embodied the social and moral ideal in its complete form. Thus progress was not a matter of individual but collective effort. As Professor Höffding says: "To a thinker who finds the divine-earthly 'substantive reason' in the State, and that not in the idea or ideal of the State, but in the State as it actually exists, the ideals, criticisms, and reasonings of the particular individual naturally appear as subjective opinions and wishes, as a giving oneself airs, a 'knowing better,' which fails to recognise the deep truth of that which has historical existence. In accordance with the principle, 'Those who know should rule, not the ignorance and vanity of those who know better,' Hegel recognises in the bureaucracy the true representatives of the State. 'The government rests with the world of officials.' He believed this principle recognised in Germany, more especially in Prussia."

It is significant of this line of thought

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that it tends to emphasise the idea of duties rather than rights—the duties of the State rather than the rights of the individual. Green was so much in sympathy with the Radicalism of Cobden and Bright that Hegel's deification of the State never quite satisfied him. The result is that his political philosophy lacks definiteness. He is in sympathy with Individualism on many points, while the large powers he grants to the State brings him unconsciously near to Socialism. As he becomes a cultured Liberal, he fixes his eye on the State as a culture institution whose object is to frame laws which will make for the highest possible development of the individual, and in order to secure that he will not quarrel with State interference of a drastic kind. Green was fortified in his belief in State intervention by his opinion that there was no longer danger from legislation in the interests of a privileged class. His optimism in this regard descended to his disciples, and probably explains the marvellous blindness of British Hegelians to the germs of Socialism which lay hidden in Hegelian Collectivism. A number of years ago, Oxford Liberals, by

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their advocacy of Collectivism, unwittingly gave Socialism a great impetus.

On their own principles it is difficult to see how Hegelian Liberals can combat Socialism, when it carries State supremacy to its logical conclusion, not merely in the sphere of industry, but in regard to family life, in providing old-age pensions in cutting down incomes in the interests of the poor—in short, in carrying out the Socialist ideal, that of making every poor man sit under his rich neighbour's vine and fig-tree no tax-gatherer daring to make him afraid. In itself Socialism need cause no alarm; its danger lies in the fact of its rapid spread among the class who, were they unanimous, could, by means of the legislative machinery, bring about industrial and social anarchy. The ideas underlying Socialism are as crude as they are ancient. Not to go back to the Socialism of Plato, we find at the time of the French Revolution all sorts of fantastic schemes to bring about the poor man's millennium. Thus we find Mably declaring that the State should act as a general and highly-coercive provider. Morelly goes a stage further. He believed



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that private property should be abolished; and that every citizen should be reduced to the position of a functionary in the State, and that all the affairs of private and domestic life should be minutely regulated by law. Then we have Proudhon with his rousing socialistic watchword, "Property is Robbery," and who is said to have defended theft as correcting the injustice of private property! But Godwin is the advocate of a Socialism which is not ashamed of its principles. In his 'Political Justice' he proposed the abolition of property and all inequalities. The real owner of a loaf of bread, according to Godwin, is the man who most needs it. Godwin was not afraid of his opinions. He would abolish the institution of marriage, which he declared to be a fraud—an idea which modern Socialists are gradually reaching by their State education and feeding of children. To the parent the Socialist State says: "You need not concern yourself; we will look after your child." And to the child: "You need not concern yourself; we will look after your aged parents." Under such a *régime* family life becomes a "hollow

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mockery. The fact is, Socialism spells retrogression. It strikes at the root of individual initiation and energy -- the two qualities which lie at the root of a progressive civilisation. Socialism is out of place in an era of Individualism. It belongs to the Military era, with its watchwords of "Regimentalism and Coercion." Introduced in the modern world it would spell individual mediocrity, social stagnation, political despotism, and industrial decay.

Socialism aspires to be something more than an economic and political remedy for the evils which afflict society. Socialism aspires to be a religion. Indeed, one section endeavours to identify Socialism with Christianity. It is natural that earnest men in all the Churches should treat Socialism sympathetically, standing as it does for the principle of brotherhood. It is well, in the interests of correct thinking, to come to a clear understanding in regard to the relation between Christianity and Socialism. Both agree in dissatisfaction with the existing social and industrial order, and both have an ideal of a society in which the idea of brotherhood shall take practical shape in

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the form of a co-operative life, in which the stern struggle for existence, with its grinding poverty and degradation, will be impossible. In the means by which this ideal is to be realised Christianity and Socialism part company. Christianity rests its hope of social regeneration on individual regeneration. Its watchword is character. Socialism rests its hope of social regeneration on a rearrangement of conditions. Its watchword is environment. Socialism has no place in its gospel for the beatitudes. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." What can Socialists make of that saying? They simply shrug their shoulders, and remark, in the words of the Biglow Papers, "They didn't know everything down in Judee." "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." What have Socialists to say to that? They are quite willing to be filled, but they prefer that the capitalists and the middle classes generally should do the hungering and thirsting after righteousness. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Here, too, Socialists believe in division of labour.

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They prefer the capitalists to do the mourning, while they take the comfort. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Socialists have no objection to poverty of spirit. What they object to is poverty of purse. They are more interested in the comforts of earth than in the joys of heaven. The ideals of Christianity are not those of Socialism. And the reason of the antagonism is not far to seek.

Socialists fail to see any attempt to make Christianity a living force in the social and industrial sphere. Recent industrial developments, indeed, have made the contrast between Christian profession and practice more glaring than ever. In his 'Past and Present,' Carlyle sketched a career of heroism for the Captains of Industry. He showed how, inspired by the old noble idea of leadership, they could do much to throw a halo round industry. But the Captains of Industry are rapidly being displaced by Trusts, Syndicates, and Companies. The old personal tie between master and workmen is all but a thing of the past. Now it is becoming a significant fact that in the large industrial concerns in which the

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men are not human beings but "hands," parts of the machinery, there Socialism spreads most rapidly. In the old days, in slack seasons it was no uncommon thing for masters to run their works at a loss in order to keep their men employed. Now, when orders run out up go intimations for the discharge of hundreds of workers, who are thrown on to the unemployed market without compunction. No doubt this, to some extent, is due to the antagonism between employers and employed, fostered by Trade Unionism; but be the cause what it may, the result is the rapid growth of Socialism. What the working man dreads more than reduced wages is insecurity of employment. He sees his fellows, who are fortunate enough to get municipal berths, enjoying security of employment and pensions, and he naturally desires to see the municipal idea extended to the State. The working man, moreover, feels himself in an anomalous position. Politically he enjoys independence, while economically he believes himself to be in a condition of dependence. If by his votes he can determine the complexion of the State,

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why should not he use his political independence to secure his economic independence? Whether we like it or not—and some of us do not like it, and see social and industrial anarchy ahead—we are on the eve of a revolution. History at long intervals records revolutions. What was the Reformation but a religious revolution? What was the great upheaval in France but a social and political revolution? These might have been avoided had Rome in the one case, and monarchy in the other, been less anxious about their rights and more anxious about their duties. Let the capitalist class take warning. Unless they give greater prominence to their duties, and be less anxious about their rights, they will find themselves face to face with another revolution—an economic revolution. It will be bloodless; it will be fought with political weapons; but before it is over it will shake the industrial world to its foundations.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE RISE OF IMPERIALISM.

IN tracing the various stages in the century's political development we have hitherto been mainly concerned with what may be called Constitutional politics—namely, the relation between the State and the individual as summed up in the watchwords Monarchy, Autocracy, and Democracy. In each of these we find the relations between the State and the individual undergoing important changes. Our object has been to trace the evolution of those changes so as to introduce something like order into a sphere which to most readers is enveloped in confusion. But political science embraces something wider than the relation between the State and the individual: it embraces the relations of States with one another. Here, too, we can trace a certain

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evolutionary process. In dealing with this part of the subject we must take as our starting-point the French Revolution. It is a striking fact that the Revolution which started to vindicate the rights of man soon developed into a vindication of the rights of nations. France resented the right of the European Powers to prevent it managing its affairs in its own way, even to the extent of putting their monarch to death. It is an equally striking fact that France, under the rule of Napoleon, totally forgetful of the rights of nations, set itself to tyrannise over other nations, just those nations which had previously tried to tyrannise over France. In the interests of national rights it was found necessary to oppose Napoleon, and out of his defeat there sprang up the Holy Alliance, whose ostensible object was to free Europe from the Napoleonic despotism.

The peoples of the various countries soon found that they had exchanged one despotism for another. In their efforts to free themselves from the rule of monarchical despotism, the European peoples evoked the spirit of nationality which rested not till it had made



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war with all forms of alien rule. The history of the greater part of the century is the history of the rise of the spirit of nationality which has given birth to a united Germany and a united Italy, and which in other parts of Europe is still struggling to find expression. It seems, however, to be a law of history, that whenever the spirit of nationality has triumphed it cannot rest upon its laurels; it seeks other worlds to conquer. Just as France at the time of the Revolution, not content with hurling back the tide of invasion from its own borders, set itself, under Napoleon, to aspire to Imperial rule over other nations, so in these latter days we find triumphant Nationalism giving birth to Imperialism. What do we mean by nationality? In the words of J. S. Mill: "A portion of mankind may be said to constitute a nation if they are united among themselves by common sympathies which do not exist between themselves and others." Napoleon's fall was due to the fact that he attempted to unite under his Imperial rule peoples of alien national sympathies. Napoleon was engaged upon a task which was bound to end in dis-

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aster even had there been no Waterloo. We can conceive of a form of nationalism which would peacefully glide into internationalism. Some such form Kant probably had in his mind when he looked forward to the federation of mankind. Such a form of internationalism Cobden, too, had in his view by means of peaceful commerce. As matters turned out, the strong nationalities which sprang out of the national spirit in the middle of the century did not make for pacific internationalism. There was no revival of the dynastic and religious rivalries and animosities which kept Europe in a state of turmoil during the eighteenth century. The bone of contention was what was called the struggle for industrial supremacy. Commerce, which Cobden believed would cement the various nations, proved a disturbing force. The various nations overflowing their racial boundaries, engaged themselves in a struggle for foreign markets. Trade, it was said, follows the flag. Therefore it became a matter of economic necessity to ignore national standards, and in the interests of trade to aspire to Imperial sway.

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If trade follows the flag, obviously the all-important thing is to annex territory upon which to plant the flag. Out of this grew the struggle between Great Britain, Russia, Germany, and France for supremacy in the East—a struggle which for the moment has been suspended by the marvellous rise of Japan. As a matter of course, Imperialism, inspired by such an economic ideal, needs for its success increased expenditure on fleets and arms, and, what is of graver import, it creates a spirit of deadly rivalry, of international hate, which throws civilisation back to the barbaric stage. It may be well to dwell for a little upon a political theory which is fraught with such world-wide consequences.

Imperialism is traceable to an erroneous interpretation of the Darwinian theory. Huxley, as the interpreter of Darwin, is greatly to blame for representing life among primitive people as a perpetual Donnybrook, where the weak are trampled upon by the strong, where the strongest and most cunning in the interests of evolution are hailed as the fittest to survive. Out of this grows the belief that might is right. Now, if life is

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a scene of incessant warfare, if Nature's intention is to give her approval to the strongest, then there is no such thing as right. Might rules the world. In that case Spain did well in trying to conquer Holland. She failed, but her intentions were honourable. The Armada was not a colossal piece of wickedness on the part of Spain—it was only a tactical blunder. To the same category belong religious persecutions. If might is right, justice is a delusion. Brute force is the deity of the world. Observe how congenial such a philosophy of life is to the literary mind. The literary man, as a rule, has no philosophy of life. He is an artist, and the material with which an artist works are dramatic episodes, vivid contrasts, violent if not turbulent emotions. The artist has difficulty with a life of peace resting on Quakerism. He yearns for scenes of strife. He shrinks from the Quaker conception of life. While taking care to keep his own bones unbroken, he loves nothing so much as life on the Donnybrook principle. Thus it has happened that around the Huxleys there have been grouped the Carlyles, the Kiplings, and

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the Henleys. By his literary patronage of the menagerie theory of national life, Carlyle did much to popularise the gospel of Force. Prince Bismarck put it into action on the Continent. Messrs Rhodes and Chamberlain, with the approval of the Kiplings and the Henleys, transplanted it into South Africa. The poet-laureate, Mr Alfred Austin, a kind of Tennyson in bib and tucker, did his best, though in a style reminiscent of the nursery, to fall in with the fashionable craze. We should like to press this thought — if the Huxleyan view of life is correct, if men's interests are inherently antagonistic, national interests must also be antagonistic, and Protection is the only logical fiscal policy. If nations are natural enemies, if the progress of one nation can only be had at the expense of others, the nation which grabs the most territory and shuts out others from profitable trade will be the victor in the struggle for supremacy. But this supremacy involves colossal fleets and arms, and a diplomacy founded upon hostility.

A theory which ends in such terrible results must be wrong somewhere. Where lies the

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error? The error lies at the root, and is due to a false interpretation of the doctrine of evolution. As the present writer has said elsewhere:<sup>1</sup> "It is now being recognised that the pessimism of the Darwinian period is largely due to a superficial interpretation of Nature and her methods. At the first blush it would seem as if, from the Darwinian point of view, Nature was given over to universal warfare. In 'In Memoriam' Tennyson has given poetic expression to the sombre, not to say gloomy thoughts which force themselves upon the cultured observer of Nature. Now, it is usually forgotten that in order to emphasise the rationality of his views of the origin of the marvellous variety and complexity of species, it was necessary for Darwin to call special attention to the struggle for existence and its prime cause—namely, the tendency of population to outrun the means of subsistence. There are two other tendencies, however, which, as not bearing on his particular problem, Darwin did not specify, but which must be taken into account in any philosophic survey of history—namely, the

<sup>1</sup> 'Adam Smith' in the Famous Scots Series."

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tendency of man, in order to relieve the intensity of the struggle for existence, to unite with his fellows, and the tendency of man towards increasing intelligence by which he can increase the productive power of Nature, thereby checking the fierce struggle which in the animal world goes on between population and subsistence. See how these two tendencies give to human evolution the quality of hopefulness. The fierce struggle for existence which among animals leads to warfare, among men has the same result in the earlier days of primitive life. But by virtue of dawning intelligence and the germs of co-operation developed in family life, man discovers the advantages of union. Whereas animals fight one another for food which is more or less scarce, men by co-operative methods begin to grow food, thereby increasing the productive power of Nature. In order to facilitate the process comes division of labour, which leads to barter; and thus, instead of a fierce struggle for existence among isolated individuals, we have the beginning of a new method, that of co-operative assistance in the struggle for exist-

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ence, and for result great increase in the means of subsistence, and great increase in the individual share."

In that little word "barter" lies the germ of a philosophy of society. It marks the change in evolution which took place when, in Herbert Spencer's suggestive phrase, humanity passed from the military into the industrial stage. With masterly hand Spencer, in his 'Sociology' and his 'Ethics,' has traced the course of evolution from the early dawn of social struggle up to the industrial era in which war is shown to be as economically foolish as it is morally degrading. On the little word "barter" hangs Adam Smith's 'Wealth of Nations.' By means of "barter" Adam Smith and his friend David Hume saw how nations could abandon their ancient feuds and co-operate with one another to advantage. If wealth results from barter, obviously the fewer obstacles you place in the way the better. Free Trade, as Cobden demonstrated, brings advantages to all nations, inasmuch as it leads to the exchange of products at the least possible cost. On the basis of such a theory of life Protection has no standing.



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What Cobden saw with clear and unerring vision was that Free Trade, which broke down the monopoly of landowners to the advantage of the consumer, would, when logically developed, break down all monopolies in the interests of humanity as such, apart from purely national distinctions. David Hume, like Adam Smith and Richard Cobden, grasped the true idea of international co-operation, as is seen in the following words: "Nothing is more usual among the States which have made some advances in commerce than to look on the progress of their neighbours with a suspicious eye, to consider all trading States as their rivals, and to suppose that it is impossible for any of them to flourish but at their expense. In opposition to this narrow and malignant opinion I will venture to assert that the increase of riches and commerce in any one nation, instead of hurting, commonly promotes the riches and commerce of all its neighbours; and that a State can scarcely carry its trade and industry very far where all the surrounding States are buried in ignorance, sloth, and barbarism. . . . Were our narrow and malignant politics to meet

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with success, we should reduce all our neighbouring nations to the same state of sloth and ignorance that prevails in Morocco and the coast of Barbary!" But what would be the consequence? They would send us no commodities; they could take none from us; our domestic commerce itself would languish for want of emulation, example, and instruction; and we ourselves should soon fall into the same abject condition to which we had reduced them. I shall therefore venture to acknowledge that not only as a man, but as a British subject, I pray for the flourishing commerce of Germany, Spain, Italy, and even France itself. I am at least certain that Great Britain and all these nations would flourish more did their sovereigns and their ministers adopt such large and benevolent sentiments towards each other." On similar lines were the remarks of Mr A. J. Balfour at the annual dinner of the Iron and Steel Institute on May 8, 1903: "I am one of those who profoundly distrust the current creed, or the creed which is largely current—that the prosperity of one nation is the adversity of another; that he best serves the

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industrial prosperity of his own nation who attempts to depress the industrial prosperity, or to snatch a share of the common work of industry from some other nation. I believe this to be utterly untrue. . . . The riches of one nation conduce, believe me, not to the poverty, but to the wealth of another nation ; and if we could double or treble by a stroke of some fairy wand the wealth of every nation in the world but our own, depend upon it our nation would greatly profit by the process."

What follows from this conception of national progress on the lines of international reciprocity? Surely recognition of the truth that national welfare has an economic, not a military basis. This simple fact, however, has been ignored, not only by statesmen but by historians, with disastrous results, in our schools, where children are inoculated with sentiments of patriotism which increase racial hatreds. For example, to the schoolboy in a secondary school the defeat of the Spanish Armada is an event which represents to his mind simply a great sea-fight, in which heroic English captains, aided by rough weather,

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defeated a grand hostile effort on the part of Spain. The schoolboy has numbers of such facts at his finger-ends, and thinks he knows history well. Now the first duty of a Professor of History would be to undeceive him. The student would be told that the Armada was simply an episode in the decline of Spain. For that decline he would be asked to trace the economic causes. He would come to see a people despising industry, expelling an industrious portion of the community because of religious bigotry, and content to stake its proud national existence on the silver mines of America. He would have pointed out to him how Spain was one of the last great exponents of militarism on behalf of religion, and how gradually religious wars gave place to wars of territory and colonies. The eighteenth-century conception of colonies would be dealt with, and the Professor, with 'The Wealth of Nations' in his hand, would point out the absurdity of territorial possessions, secured in greed, and held by great military force as an exclusive commercial preserve.

The result of such teaching would be to turn out students who would have an edu-

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cative influence upon the political community around them. Unhappily, history of recent years has oscillated between the 'Almanac' and the 'Court Journal.' In the hands of purely prosaic writers, history is apt to become a bare record of facts. In the hands of writers with the patriotic bias, history is apt to resolve itself into a glorification of national heroes. The impression which the ordinary reader carries away is that national greatness is dependent upon our Army and Navy. In the eighteenth century the foundation of the national greatness was laid, it is said, by Pitt, and made permanent by a succession of brave commanders. We triumphed over Holland and France, and we now consider that the same heroism will enable us to triumph over all future rivals. This distorted view of history arises from too close reliance upon literary methods. Literature has to do with action and feeling as expressed by individuals, and when history is written from the literary point of view it tends to exaggerate individual acts and to depreciate general causes. Attention to the influence of general causes would show that the basis of national great-

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ness is more economic than individual: We talk grandly in the style of Sir John Seeley of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as being the time when the great struggle was going on between England, Holland, and France for empire. Holland lost because England destroyed her fleets. France lost her chance of empire when we drove her out of India and North America. England's heroism culminated at Waterloo, where France received her final blow. Scarcely for one instant does the average historian place before the reader the fact that England triumphed over her rivals because of her economic superiority. Holland lost the supremacy of the sea, not because her fleet was destroyed by the naval heroes of England, but because Holland's prosperity rested on too narrow an economic basis. France lost North America, not solely because of our superior bravery, but because France, by drawing too rapidly on her resources, became economically weak as the prelude to military weakness. Our military triumph culminating at Waterloo was due not mainly to the genius of Wellington but to the exhaustion of Napoleon. *The Twenty Years'*

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War had ruined France, while, thanks to our natural monopoly of industry, we were able to keep fighting after our enemy was exhausted. The same line of thought lands us in the conclusion that Great Britain's military supremacy will last exactly as long as her economic supremacy. This is a view of the case, however, far beyond the horizon of the patriotic historian.

There is a true as well as a false Imperialism. If there is to be a real abiding international life, the main factor must be not domination but co-operation. If looked into, it will be found that all genuine progress made during the past has not been made on the lines of domination but of co-operation. Look over the history of our country, and you will find that insistence upon the idea of domination has been the cause of all those wars which every one now admits to be hideous blunders. Our delusions on this head may be divided into three: belief in the necessity of religious domination, dynastic domination, and national domination. The Reformation struggle gave birth to the notion that the world would not go right unless

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Protestantism was the dominant international force. From Cromwell to William of Orange this delusion was the cause of appalling expenditure of blood and treasure. The delusion is dead beyond all hope of resurrection. Humanity looks back upon religious warfare as a hideous nightmare. The dynastic delusion gave birth to efforts by devastating wars to secure the balance of power. England entered into entangling alliances on the Continent to carry out dynastic domination, a delusion now classed with witchcraft and kindred superstitions. The Imperial delusion took its rise in the notion that trade was impossible apart from possession of territory. Fortified by a comprehensive theory of man and society, the student will have no difficulty in combating theories of national supremacy which, by obliterating the ideas of right and wrong, end in sheer barbarism.



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### CHAPTER XV.

#### IMPERIAL FEDERATION.

As was said at the close of the last chapter, there are two kinds of Imperialism. The one kind with which we have dealt has played a great part in history, and has left behind it a black record of disaster, and has for its watchwords the subjugation of alien races and the forcible annexation of territory. The other kind of Imperialism takes into account the great race-cementing forces—unity of race, sentiment, and religion. This kind of Imperialism rests not upon despotic rule but upon self-government, and takes for its watchword not subjugation but co-operation. Naturally this type of Imperialism, which may be called democratic Imperialism, was a comparatively late product of the nineteenth

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century. In the first instance it grew indirectly out of Great Britain's disastrous experiment with the American Colony.

The federal principle is not a new idea in political science, but in this country it only really came into the sphere of practical politics during the dispute with the American Colonies, whose interests were entirely subordinated to the interests of the mother country. In the opinion of the Government of the day the American Colonies were valued solely as commerce feeders of the mother country. In vain did Adam Smith denounce the policy of founding a great empire for the sole purpose of raising up a nation of customers. Lord North and his friends insisted upon subordinating the interests of the Colonies to those of Great Britain, and the end was the loss of America.

Even in those days a few wise thinkers saw in the federal principle a method of unifying the interests of the mother country and the Colonies. Some of Burke's greatest speeches were made in advocacy of a policy of conciliation. He is said to have favoured the idea of colonial repre-

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sentation in the British Parliament, but, owing to distance and other obstacles, he feared the scheme would prove impracticable. On this aspect of the question Adam Smith was more hopeful than Burke. In his 'Wealth of Nations' he has the following: "There is not the least probability that the British Constitution would be hurt by the union of Great Britain and her colonies. That constitution, on the contrary, would be completed by it, and seems imperfect without it. The assembly which deliberates and decides concerning the affairs of every part of the Empire in order to be properly informed, ought certainly to have representatives from every part of it. That this union, however, could be easily effectuated, or that difficulties and great difficulties might not occur in the execution, I do not pretend. I have yet heard of none, however, which appear insurmountable. The principal perhaps arise, not from the nature of things, but from the prejudices and opinions of the people, both on this and on the other side of the Atlantic." Adam Smith was ahead of his time. His views fell upon uncongenial

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soil. No solution of the dispute was thought possible but war.

With the separation of the American Colonies grew up the belief that at a certain stage of colonial development separation was inevitable. The belief was intensified by the remarkable prediction of Turgot a quarter of a century before the Declaration of Independence: "As soon as America can take care of herself she will do what Carthage did." "Colonies," he added, "are like fruits which cling to the tree only till they ripen." The view that colonies were useless encumbrances held sway in political thought far into the nineteenth century. The early Radicals, like James Mill, and the enemies of war, came to the conclusion that the people of this country should attend to their own affairs and leave outsiders to attend to their affairs. It seemed plain from the experience of America that we could not keep colonies against their will. Further, it became a doubtful point whether they were worth keeping at all. Immersed in purely British politics, both parties did not recognise the significance of the use of the Australian colonies. They

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failed to see the bearing of the expansion of England upon the theory of government.

We are accustomed to date the interest in Imperial Federation to the writings of Froude and Seeley. Seeley's book, 'The Expansion of England,' certainly did much for the growth of the Imperial sentiment in this country, but the first impulse came from Australia. In 1844, in the Legislative Council of Sydney, Mr Robert Lowe, afterwards Lord Sherbrook, said: "He hoped and believed that the time was not remote when Great Britain would give up the idea of treating the dependencies of the Crown as children who were to be cast adrift by their parent as soon as they arrived at manhood, and substitute for it the far wiser and nobler policy of knitting herself and her colonies into one mighty confederacy, girdling the earth in its whole circumference, and confident against the world in arts and arms." This was not an isolated expression in the Colonies. In the middle of last century there began to revive in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada the federation idea of Edmund Burke and Adam Smith. By-and-by the

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idea made its appearance in this country. In his 'Recollections and Suggestions,' Earl Russell has the following reflection: "I am disposed to believe that if a congress or assembly representing Great Britain and her dependencies could be convoked from time to time to sit for several months in the autumn, arrangements reciprocally beneficial might be made. . . . In my eyes it would be a sad spectacle—it would be a spectacle for gods and men to weep at—to see this brilliant Empire, the guiding star of freedom, broken up; to behold Nova Scotia, the Cape of Good Hope, Jamaica, and New Zealand, try each its little spasm of independence, while France, the United States, and Russia would be looking at each, willing to annex one or more fragments to the nearest parts of their dominions."

It cannot be said that the federation idea took root rapidly in this country. In spite of the influential support and the formation of an Imperial Federation League, the movement made little headway. Lord Rosebery, who has always been a staunch Federationist, worked hard in the advocacy of the move-

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ment. Hitherto federation had been, so to speak, outside of politics, but Lord Rosebery, probably seeing that till the question entered into the political arena, it would remain at the academic stage, began to rouse his fellow Liberals to interest in the subject. Thus we find Lord Rosebery, at a gathering of Liberals in London in 1899, referring to Imperial Federation as follows: "There is one important change which has come, not since 1886, as it was coming before then, and which has come to affect the old Liberal party, and also the old Conservative party, and which has materially changed the whole aspect of British politics. I mean the greater pride in Empire, which is called Imperialism. What is Imperialism? Many people who know all about Imperialism and everything else denounce it with the utmost heartiness. It is, they say, the cause of all our evils, it is the cause of our swollen Budgets—in fact, in it lurks every conceivable evil that affects the British Commonwealth. But Imperialism—sane Imperialism as distinguished from what I may call wild-cat Imperialism—is nothing but this, a larger

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patriotism. When I first entered public life patriotism seemed to be confined to these islands. The politicians of those days seemed to consider that the Colonies were like the tails of some creeping things, liable to be snapped off at a moment's notice and therefore immaterial to the creature itself. The Colonies were considered as outside provinces, with which we had only a temporary connection, and with which, therefore, we never had any definite interest. But in the last thirty-five years a change, caused by travel, and to some extent caused by greater education, a change has come over the spirit of our people. They know that these islands, though they are the centre of an Empire, are only a small portion of our Empire; and though I admit that the heart of the Empire lies within these islands, both parties in the State have come to recognise that British influence, which is recognised throughout the Empire, is as potent outside these islands as it is within."

With Mr Joseph Chamberlain's appointment to the Colonial Office in the late Conservative Government Imperial Federation at once took first place on the political stage.



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In many of his speeches the new Colonial Secretary gave prominence to Imperial topics, and in a distinctly patriotic vein declared for closer relations with our kin beyond the sea. But of greater value than the speeches of politicians in giving an impetus to the movement was the South African war, which, by calling forth in practical shape in the form of colonial regiments in defence of the mother country, demonstrated the existence of a friendly feeling which lifted Imperial Federation clean out of the academic arena. The war, along with the federation of the Australian States, prepared the minds of British statesmen for the consideration of federation on a practical basis. In April 1907, under the Liberal Government, which had come into power with a large majority, a Colonial Conference was held in London with a view to formulating a basis of closer union between the Colonies and the mother country.

Before the return of the Liberals to office, Mr Chamberlain, in a number of public speeches, had outlined a commercial scheme by which, in his opinion, the mother country and the Colonies would be consolidated into

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one great empire. As the Colonies, wedded to Protection, would never consent to join commercially with the mother country on a Free Trade basis, Mr Chamberlain thought it might be possible for the mother country to make a sacrifice of her Free Trade principles for the sake of the Imperial idea. He thought it possible that the Colonies might give preferential treatment in the matter of duties to British goods as against foreign goods, in return for which we might impose a slight duty on food and raw material. The result of the General Election of 1906, which turned largely upon this proposal, showed conclusively that the people of this country were opposed to any tampering with Free Trade, even for the sake of Imperial Federation—a result, by the way, which Mr Chamberlain himself predicted before he became an advocate of the preferential scheme. Speaking in London in June 1896 at a meeting of the Congress of Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, Mr Chamberlain, referring to the suggestion of preference, said: "I express again my own opinion when I say that there is not the slightest chance that in any reason-

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able time this country, or the Parliament of this country, would adopt so one-sided an agreement. The foreign trade of this country is so large, and the foreign trade of the Colonies is comparatively so small, that a small preference given to us upon that foreign trade by the Colonies would make so trifling a difference—would be so small a benefit to the total volume of our trade—that I do not believe the working classes of this country would consent to make a revolutionary change for what they would think to be an infinitesimal gain.”

Federation upon lines such as Mr Chamberlain advocates has one fatal drawback,—by drawing a ring-fence round the mother country and the Colonies, it would at once provoke economic antagonism with foreign nations, an antagonism which might easily develop into military antagonism, and therefore indirectly bring back the worst features of the old Imperialism which associated commerce with war. If the new Imperialism is to be an aid to civilisation, it must shake itself free of the evil element of exclusiveness. It must not rest upon the idea of exclusive-

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ness, after the style of ancient empires. It must be not a monopoliser but a pioneer of civilisation. The new Imperialism must have for Great Britain a higher ideal than that of a colonial trading concern, a kind of patriotic syndicate based on Protection. Great Britain has a nobler mission than to outdo the other nations of the earth in commercial opulence, in world splendour. Imperial Federationists claim the late Sir John Seeley as one of their most powerful advocates. They would do well to take heed to his high ideal of sane Imperialism as outlined by him in his 'Natural Religion'. In contrasting the higher and the lower life, he says: "There is a lower life, of which the dominating principle is secularity, or, in the popular sense of the word, materialism. This lower life is made up of purely personal cares, and pursues even in the midst of civilisation no other object than those which the savage pursues under simpler conditions—self-preservation, personal possession and enjoyment, personal pleasure. The principle of secularity would lead, in fact, to savage isolation but for the influences which check and thwart it in civilised society, com-

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pulling it to wear a disguise, and reducing it to a dangerous tendency. The Good Cause of the world consists in resistance to this tendency and detection of its disguises, wherever it is found working, not openly in nihilistic outbreaks, but insidiously, by weakening or perverting the great institutions of co-operative life."

In other words, what Sir John Seeley calls the Good Cause is the cause of humanity as distinguished from purely national or Imperial supremacy. What are all our political endeavours, our political institutions, our nationalism, and our Imperialism for, if not to lay broad and deep the foundations of a great universal Commonwealth, in which the only rivalry will be, not a rivalry nurtured in national antagonism and hatred, but a rivalry in all good works, in social amelioration, in political equality, liberty, and brotherhood. If Greater Britain clings to a sordid ideal like materialistic Imperialism, it will go the way of the empires of the past, into the dark night of oblivion. If, on the other hand, realising its noble mission, Greater Britain, in the spirit of a high-souled Imperialism, makes

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federation a stepping-stone to higher things. to the federation of humanity under the banner of justice and brotherhood, it will fulfil the highest destiny of which a nation is capable, and in the firmament of history will shine like the stars for ever and ever.



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